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MARRIED OR SINGLE?

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"HOPE LESLIE," "REDWOOD," "HOME," ETC., ETC.

"Seven generations, haply, to this world,
To right it visibly a finger's breadth,
And mend its rents a little."
AURORA LEIGH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS,
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1857.

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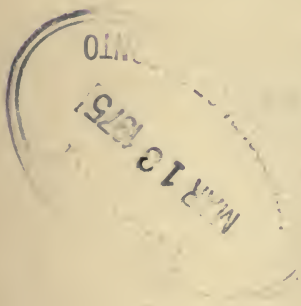

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DEDICATION.

My Dear Bessie R——n,

Why I dedicate this book to you is best known to ourselves only. That it would never have been written without your cheering and cheerful sympathy, is reason enough to allege why it is inscribed to you, by

Your loving friend,

C. M. S.

PREFACE.

The want of an innocent occupation may be reason enough why one should write, but some better reason or a plausible apology should be rendered for inflicting the writing upon the public; for if the public, in the large sense, is not obliged to read, there is a small public of kind friends, who feel a moral obligation to perform that duty. And a hard duty it may be when the novel-readers' market is supplied by such producers as Dickens, Thackeray, Charles Reade, and Mrs. Gaskell (all honor, praise, and love be to her), and our own popular writers in this department. If we do not specify Mrs. Stowe, it is that she writes for all humanity. Her books cannot be restricted to any class of readers, nor claimed exclusively by any department of literature.

The writer of "Married or Single" has the fears and faltering of a stranger in appearing before the present public. The generation known to her, and which extended a welcome and a degree of favor to her, has, for the most part, passed away. Most of those friends are gone, whose hearts vibrated (without the vanities or selfishness of personality) to her success, and she is left to feel the chill and dreariness of the "banquet-hall deserted." Still, she has friends who speak the God-speed, and young friends who will receive the fruits of her observation of the defects and wants of our social life with ingenuousness, and perhaps with some profit; and possibly there are those who will relish better a glass of water from our own fountains,

than a draught of French concoction, whose enticing flavor but disguises its insidious poison.

It might seem natural and decorous, that one approaching the limit of human life should—if writing at all—write a book, strictly religious, but the novel (and to that guild we belong) does not seem to us the legitimate vehicle of strictly religious teaching. Secular affairs should be permeated by the spirit of the altar and the temple, but not brought within the temple's holy precincts.

One word more—the moral of our story—to our young feminine readers. We have given (we confess, after some disposition to rebel), the most practical proof of our allegiance to the ancient laws of romance, by making our hero and heroine man and wife, duly and truly. *Omnia rité et solenné acta sunt.* We shall not, therefore, be suspected of irreverence to the great law of Nature, by which, in every province of her infinitely various kingdom, all "kindred drops are melted into one."

But we raise our voice with all our might against the miserable cant that matrimony is essential to the feebler sex—that a woman's single life must be useless or undignified—that she is but an adjunct of man—in her best estate a helm merely to guide the nobler vessel. Aside from the great tasks of humanity, for which masculine capacities are best fitted, we believe she has an independent power to shape her own course, and to force her separate sovereign way. Happily no illustration is needed at this day, to prove that maidens can perform with grace and honor, duties from which wives and mothers are exempted by their domestic necessities. Our sisters of mercy and charity, however they may be called, are limited to no faith and to no peculiar class of ministrations. Their smiles brighten the whole world.

But we speak especially to those of our maidens whose modesty

confines their efficiency to the circle which radiates from their home. We pray such to remember that their sex's share of the sterner sacrifices, as well as the softer graces of Christian love, does not belong alone to the noble Florence Nightingales of our day, any more than the real glories of feminine heroism were once all bound to the helmet of Joan of Arc. It is not in the broad and noisy fields sought by the apostles of "Woman's Rights," that sisterly love and maidenly charity best diffuse their native sweetness. These are sensitive-flowers—too bright and sweet indeed—as our language has just partly implied—to be fully typified by that pale plant of which it is said that

"Radiance and odor are not its dower,"

but resembling it in the essential character from which it takes its name. The modesty and sensibility which in a greater or less degree belong to other flowers as attributes, are in this, its essential nature, inwrought through every fibre of its delicate texture. The same qualities mark the maidenly virtues among the pure throng of womanly graces. These they enhance; of those, they are the distinctive nature. May it never become less exquisitely distinctive.

We do not therefore counsel our gentle young friends to nourish a spirit of enterprise, nor of necessity, even to enlarge the plain and natural circle of their duties. But in every sphere of woman—wherever her low voice thrills with the characteristic vibrations which are softer and sweeter than all the other sweet notes in nature's infinite chorus, maidens have a mission to fulfil as serious and as honorable as those of a wife's devotion, or a mother's care—a mission of wider and more various range. We need not describe it.

Our story will not have been in vain, if it has done any thing towards raising the single women of our country to the compara-

tively honorable level they occupy in England—any thing to drive away the smile already fading from the lips of all but the vulgar, at the name of "old maid."

"I speak by permission and not of commandment. * * * Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide."

C. M. S.

New York, May 12th, 1857.

MARRIED OR SINGLE?

CHAPTER I.

WOOING, WEDDING, AND REPENTING.

Two sisters were sitting, one evening, in their small private library, adjoining their sleeping apartment, in their step-mother's house, in a fashionable quarter of New York. It matters not in what year, for though this their history makes great pretension to veritableness, it pays no respect whatever to chronology. The youngest—the youngest of course takes precedence in our society—was not past eighteen, and, grown to her full stature, rather above the average height; Grace Herbert differing in most of the faculties, qualities, and circumstances of her being from the average of her sex. To a strictly classical eye she was too thin for her height, but of such exact proportions, so flexible and graceful, that the defect was insignificant. Her features were of the noble cast. Her complexion was neither fair nor brown, but exquisitely smooth and soft. Ordinarily she was pale, and her large dark eye lacked lustre; but a flash from her mind, a gust of passion, or even a gentle throb of affection, would brighten her cheek, light her eye, play over her lips, and even seem to radiate from the waving tresses of her dark hair. In that there was a notable

peculiarity. It was dark, and yet so brilliant in certain lights, that in her little court of school-girl friends, where she was queen (by divine right), it was a standing dispute whether its color were golden, auburn, or brown. But it was not form or color that so much distinguished Grace Herbert, as a certain magnanimity in the expression of her face, figure, and movement.

Her sister Eleanor was some three years older, and many years wiser, in the opinion of their friends, in Grace's, in all the world's, save Eleanor's herself. She was of the medium stature, a little too full, perhaps, for our fashion's spare ideal, but not for perfect health and loveliness. Her complexion was of the firmest texture. Not blonde that might intimate change and early decay, but fair and blooming as Hebe's. Her mouth—that can not be described by lines and colors; her uncle Walter said to her that very evening, when she gave him her good-night kiss, "Take care, dear Nelly, that the bees don't light on your lips for their honey!" Eleanor's eye was hazel, not brilliant, nor marked in form or setting; and yet such an eye, so steady, so clear, could only look out from serene memories, from religious aims, moderate expectations, and attainable hopes; from a heart of gentle and healthy affections. And there was such a holy calm on her brow, that, if the rest of her face had been veiled, one might have divined its whole expression. A divine seal was set there, with the inscription, "Though thou pass through the waters, they shall not overwhelm thee, and through the fires, they shall not consume thee."

She was sitting on a cushion beside an open, time-stained morocco trunk, heavy with brass bands, and nails, and filled with files of old letters, while Grace sat by a table with a book of Flaxman's outlines before her, and sheets of drawing-paper, some bearing fair copies of her exquisite models, and others from her own ideals, scarcely less graceful.

Is there any thing sadder than files of old family letters, where one seems to spell backward one's own future! The frail fabric of paper is still firm, while the strong hand that poured over it the heart's throbs of love, of hate, of hope or of despair, is mouldering in the grave. Letters filled with anxieties, blessed perhaps in their realization; hopes defeated in their very accomplishment, letters soiled with professions of everlasting affection that exhaled with a few mornings' dews, and stamped with sincere loves, that seem, as the time-stained sheet trembles in the hand, to breathe from heaven upon it; letters with announcements of births, to be received with a family—all hail!—and then with fond records of opening childhood—and then—the black-lined sheet, and the hastily-broken seal, and the story of sickness and death; letters with gay disclosures of betrothals, of illimitable hopes, and sweet reliance; and a little further down in the file, conjugal dissatisfactions, bickerings, and disappointments, and perchance the history, from year to year, of a happy married love, tried and made stronger by trial, cemented by every joy, brightened all along its course with cheerfulness and patience, and home loves, and charities; but in this there is solemnity, for it is past. The sheaves are gathered into the garner, and on earth is nothing left but the seared stubble-field!

"Eleanor," exclaimed Grace, looking up from her drawing, "what are you doing with that hecatomb of letters?"

"I have selected them to burn; they are only grandmamma's, and her friends', and Aunt Annie's, and Uncle Tom's."

"All that is left of their profitable lives!" said Grace, with a mournful shake of her head.

"They had interest in their time, as our's have, Grace. We spent all yesterday morning in matching our new silks with trimmings, and half the day before, in ordering our

new hats; we can not blame grandmamma if she did the same thing fifty years ago."

"No—no—but is it not a bitter satire on life, as we live it? Hand me half a dozen of the letters, just as they come; let me see the stuff they are made of. Ah! this is Uncle Tom's!" She ran her eye over the letter, reading aloud a paragraph here and there.

"Dear Sam:—

"I should have written you as I promised, if I had found any thing to write, but the town has been deuced dull. Now it's waking up; there is a splendid little actress here—one Mrs. Darley; our set patronize her. ('*Patronize*—audacity!' exclaimed Grace.) Fanny Dawson has come home—a splendid beauty! I and she rode out to Love Lane before breakfast yesterday; my new horse is fine under the saddle—Fanny is finer, but I shan't try my harness there; I am shy of reins; one can't tell who will hold them, so Miss Fanny will be left for my elder—if not my better—"

"O! did our shallow-pated uncle," again interrupted Grace, "presume to entertain the idea that he could marry a woman Uncle Walter would marry! What coxcombs men are!"

"Miss Fanny Dawson, I imagine," said Eleanor, "was not so far above Uncle Tom, as she was below Uncle Walter!"

"What woman, Eleanor, ever did reach the stature of Uncle Walter's great heart?"

Eleanor smiled fondly on her sister, as if she were thinking that sister might attain it, and proceeded with the edifying letter.

"The coat you ordered me for Bill's wedding came in the nick of time. The bride observed the fit and said she could tell a London made coat at a glance: she is cool, the widow that was. The old bishop married them; he was behind time; when he did come, I was sent up stairs to announce him to the expecting couple. Bill was striding up and down the room, looking all colors, mostly blue; and what think you, Sam, the brisk little widow was about? darning a silk stocking!—'pon honor, Sam; and as she put it aside, she said, 'darning was the best of sedatives.'"

"O! our precious step-mother!" exclaimed Grace; "divine in her unchangeableness."

"Grace! Grace!" said Eleanor, in a half smiling, half rebuking tone.

"It is well enough," continued the letter, "for Bill to put his head in the noose again: he has children, and they must be taken care of; but I shall keep myself free of these shackles. If a man don't make a slump as to the woman, there are children to bring up, and be provided for, and it don't pay."

"The unmanly wretch—read no more, Eleanor."

"There is little more to read; there is a long hiatus, and then this postscript:"

"My letter has lain by a month, and now I *have* news. Smith, Jones and Co. have gone bankrupt, and poor Bill is on their paper well-nigh to the amount of his fortune; Luckily there's something left, and then there's the little widow's fortune. Well, I go for the children of this world, that are wise in their generation. Commend me to the Londoners in general.—Believe me, as ever, your's faithfully,

"Tom Herbert."

"Is it in that fashion, Mr. Tom Herbert speaks of my father's losses?" said Grace. "Hand me another, haphazard, Eleanor."

She took a letter from Eleanor, and looking at the signature, read "Arabella Simpson."

"O! that frightful, deaf old Mrs. Clary, that grandmamma used to wonder we did not find beautiful, and tell us she was such a belle in her time! Let us see what she says."

"My Sweetest Annie:—

"You may conceive, but I can not describe, how wretched I feel at our separation. You would hear from me much oftener if I followed the dictates of my heart, but my time is so absorbed that it is quite impossible to find a moment for my truest, darlingest, little friend. I write now to entreat you to match the feathers I send; aren't they loves? I have spent two days in attempting to do it here. New York is a paradise for shops, you know; in this horrid Quaker city there's no variety; at the same time, dearest love, will you look for a sash, the shade of the feathers? You may send me a sample, or you may send me several, if you feel uncertain about the match. It is really trying, the difficulty of matching. I sometimes walk up and down the streets of Philadelphia, hours and hours, to match a lace or a fringe, and so does my mamma. The Grays wear pink bonnets this winter. Mrs. Remson has come out in her old yellow brocade again—the third winter, mamma says—just think of it! Do they hold on to powder yet in New York? I dread its going out—'tis so becoming; It makes me quite wretched that you don't come on this winter, dear little pearl! My hair was superbly dressed at Mrs. Lee's ball; I paid dear for it, though, for Pardessus was engaged ten hours ahead, so I had mine done at three A.M. Of course I didn't feel over well the next day, and General

Washington observed it, and said he did not like to see young ladies look pale. As it was the only time he ever spoke to me, he might have found something more pleasing to say; pale or not, I found partners for every dance, and refused *nine!* But, darling, I must cut short my epistle, and sign myself, your sincere and ever attached friend,

"ARABELLA."

"P.S. O! please send on my 'Pious Thoughts for Every Day in the Year;' mamma never likes me to be without that book, and I could have committed ever so much that morning I got up with my hair."

Grace threw down the letter without comment, and took up another.

"This is from poor Aunt Betty, grandmamma's sister, was she not Eleanor? You keep all these musty family genealogies."

"I lived so much at my grandfather's, I could not forget them."

"And I remember nothing of those people, except that they tired me to death—shadows they were, except grandpapa, and Aunt Sarah: they were 'live people. But let me see what poor Aunt Betty says out of her shroud!"

"MY EVER DEAR SISTER:—

"Having a few leisure moments, I sit down to have a little pleasant chat with you. I have still to acknowledge your letter, informing me of the decease of our dear old friend, Lady Hepsy; strange coincidence! that she should have been burned to death, so afraid of fire as she was all her life; but so it is—'Our days a transient period run!'

"I was truly grieved to hear of Walter's losses, one after another—three promising immortal souls all gone! Well, one

can never tell where death will aim his shafts next. But we must not murmur against Providence. I am sure if any one ever performed her responsible duties, it was Walter's wife. I approved her so much when I was on my last visit to you. The children were never exposed to the air, and so provided against chills and draughts, and always taking preventive medicines."

"Eleanor, was Uncle Walter's wife a fool?" asked Grace.

"I knew little about her," replied Eleanor, "but I gathered from Aunt Sarah that she was a beauty before marriage, and a valetudinarian ever after."

"And Uncle Walter yielded to her folly? What a compound of strength and weakness Uncle Walter is!"

Eleanor proceeded with Aunt Betty's letter:

"You will feel for me, dear sister, when I tell you the measles are all over our street. You may be sure I keep the children shut up. Two of them were terribly ill last night, and I sent for Dr. Lee. I was all of a nerve when he came, expecting he would tell me they had the symptoms, but to my inexpressible relief he said it was only the cranberry sauce and mince-pie, and almonds, and raisins, and so on, they had eaten plentifully of at dinner—poor little things! how much they have to suffer in this world!"

"If you have any of Lowe's croup-conserve on hand, pray send some to me; I like to be provided. My husband will have his way with the boys, so he takes them out in all weathers, 'roughing it,' as he calls it. To be sure they are hearty now, but when sickness comes, *it will be sickness!*

"Hoping that you and yours may enjoy as much health as is consistent, I remain, my dear sister,

"Yours faithfully,

"Elizabeth Wimple."

"P.S. My love to Sally Jenkins. I am sorry her old complaint has returned; I knew it would; ask her to try Deitz's Essential Elixir.

"P.S. 2d. Please, dear sister, send me your recipe for scarlet fever, in case it prevails."

"Poor Aunt Betty!" exclaimed Grace, when the letter was finished, "and this is what she called a *pleasant chat.* Why, she is a fair pendant for the old woman Uncle Walter was chuckling over, who found it so hard to part with the old comrade she had *enjoyed* so much sickness and so many deaths with! If this is life, it were better to die now on its threshold, than to go further. Never tell, Eleanor," she added with a smile half sad and half ironical, "but do you really believe that such creatures as these of our departed family, whose minds were expended on dinners, and clubs, belles, horses, laces, and feathers, measles, and conserves, do you sincerely believe their souls survive their bodies? No, no! they perish with the things that perish. You are too much shocked to answer me, Eleanor," she continued, looking up from the pencil she had resumed. "But, what now? you have found something of real interest; how I like to see tears on your cheek; you are the only person I ever saw look pretty in tears. Your tears are like raindrops in sunshine! but what is it?"

"I have found a file of Aunt Sarah's letters," she replied, "comprising thirty years of her life. See how time-stained they are, Grace, and yet there is an immortal freshness in them. Dear Aunt Sarah, how she loved us all! How I loved her!"

"Yes—and I had a sort of indefinite wonder that you did so—that you liked to be with her—there was something so dread and shadowy about her; but now, that I know so much more of life—Grace was scarce eighteen!—I see how

it was. To your sweet nature it was the pleasure of cheering—the little divinity loved the statue it shone upon. But read me something out of her letters. I remember a certain grandeur about her, a grand silence. I wonder if she says any thing of Uncle Walter?"

"This letter announces her engagement to Frank Silborn."

"O! read that—that must be interesting."

Eleanor read—

"Dearest Cousin Emma:—

"This day I am seventeen! and this day I am the happiest creature in the universe. You will guess why, and how, for you prophesied long ago that what has now happened would come to pass. Perhaps your prophecy has led to its fulfillment—certainly hastened it, that I will allow; for since we were at Madame B.'s school, and you talked so much of him, he has been the *ideal* of my life—every thing that I have imagined of noble and beautiful has been impersonated in Frank Silborn. O think of my felicity! He is mine, I am his; as the clock struck twelve last night we plighted vows, and exchanged rings! O what a bliss is life before me! And yet now I think I would be content to die, my spirit is so raised with a sense of joy ineffable. I can not believe it is but three weeks since Frank's return; my love for him seems to stretch through my whole being.

"It is two—no, three years since we met at the fête on board the *Henri Quatre*, the eve of his departure for France. It was love at first sight. From that time he has shaped my visions by day, my dreams by night. I could not tell this to papa, when he shook his head, and said, 'I do not quite like this haste, Sarah;' but he smiled consent, while he sighed and kissed me. I think old people always

sigh when they hear of an engagement. Mamma did not, though. 'The first family in New York!' she said, 'and such a pretty fortune!' Poor mamma! she has not quite my father's single eye.

"Walter has just been in to congratulate me. One can never tell whether Walter is in jest or earnest. 'Have a care, Sarah,' he said, 'hot love is soon cold.' Ours will never be; I am sure its present heat melts away all fear of change. Frank sends for me—so adieu till we meet.

"Yours ever, S. H."

"Good heaven! is it possible?" exclaimed Grace. "O, Eleanor, how can one ever guess what is to come. I will never marry—but, go on—go on, what comes next?"

"The next letter bears date two years later. Miss Emma has just left Aunt Sarah. It is filled with details about the baby, who now fills her field of vision. You won't care to hear it, Grace."

"No; but is there nothing about that '*ideal*' of her's—poor Aunt Sarah!"

"Yes, just at the close she says: 'Frank and I have had unkind words. I am so grieved, Emma; I would that mine had never been spoken.'"

"Look at the next letter. I want to know how that little speck overcast her whole firmament, from horizon to zenith."

Eleanor unfolded five or six letters—glanced over them, and shook her head. "Those," she said, "cover twelve months. They are all about the baby's progress—some pensive sentences, but no word of her husband. Ah! here is something," opening another; "this is four years after marriage:"

"It has come, Emma. Frank and I have had a serious quarrel. He was disrespectful to my father—he spoke

abusively of him to me. I could not stand that. My father had urged his going into business; he remonstrated with him upon the danger of an idle life.—But my baby is crying for me, and I must go, and cry with it."

"Ah, it is all over," said Grace, "she is disenchanted. The *ideal* is changed to the real. Pray read on, Eleanor."

Eleanor read the next letter in the file, still two years later:

"You reproach me with my silence, dear Emma; but why should I write? The childhood of my children glides on evenly. I have nothing to tell of it. You know they are a comfort—more—more—an infinite joy to me. And of my husband I never speak. You know from what a wild, senseless dream I awoke, to find my husband was not the man I married, but idle, coarse, sensual, ill-tempered, a gambler, and a spendthrift. There are sorrows to which human sympathy is as inapplicable as it is unavailing. I must bide my destiny—there is no compromise in a bankrupt marriage! If he, who, ignorant of his pilot, goes to sea in a ship, unseaworthy and without ballast, deserves the wreck he meets, surely those who enter into the most sacred, complicated, and hazardous relation of life rashly, deserve the chastisement they provoke. Alas! Emma, sorrow has made me early wise! I see that my dear father shares the sorrow with me, as he does the blame. He should have delayed the marriage—corrected my youth by his age. O! how white his head has become in the last two years, while my heart has grown wrinkled and gray!

"There come my blessed little ones from their walk. Their voices are to my troubled soul far more potent than David's harp to Saul's!"

Eleanor looked at the date of the next letter, one year later, and read on:—"I have been in tribulation, dear Emma, for the last few weeks. I begin to feel it intolerable to live under the same roof with my husband. I had sedulously concealed his irregularities. Last week I told the whole story to my father. I begged of him to effect an amicable separation, but my husband would listen to no terms, and will never give the children to me, but by the compulsion of the law; and the result at law is uncertain, for my father says the law has neither justice nor mercy for a woman. I can not go through the mire of a public trial. I will not expose my children to the after misery of knowing their father's infamy. I will never leave them—I would rather lie down at the threshold of their door, and have my life trodden out. But do not grieve too much for me, dear Emma. While they, my darlings, live, I have life, and hope, and, God be praised, much joy."

"Poor Aunt Sarah!" said Eleanor, wiping the blinding tears from her eyes. "The next letter," she said, "is in a different hand. Bless me, it is grandpapa's! I know—yes, I supposed it was just about this time it happened. How it's blotted!—how the hand faltered! Dear old grandpapa!"

"Dearest Emma:—

"It is my sad duty to write to you the most sorrowful news—prepare yourself, my child, for it will greatly shock you. Yesterday afternoon—I can scarcely guide my pen—Silborn drove up to his door in a curricle, and insisted on taking the two little boys, who were just dressed for a walk, to ride. Sarah must have seen he was greatly excited—in no state to drive—for the nurse says 'she refused decidedly to let the children go;' whereupon he snatched them both, and ran out of the house with them to

the carriage. He drove furiously up the street, turned the corner short, ran afoul a loaded wagon, turned over the carriage—the boys, our dear little boys, were thrown against a curb-stone and killed, instantly—both Sarah's little boys—*both*, Emma—*both!*

"For God's sake come down as soon as possible. Sarah sits over her children with her hands clasped, without saying one word, or dropping one tear. God knows what will be the end."

Eleanor dropped the letter, and both girls wept, as if they had never heard the tragedy before. They knew it as one of the family traditions, and had received it, after time had seared over the wounds. Such wounds are never healed. They knew, too, what no letter recorded, that their aunt was torn from the children to be carried to an insane asylum, where she remained two years; and they were not surprised to find the next letter of five years' later date:

"Dear Emma:—

"I promised, when we parted, to resume our long-suspended correspondence. With what varied emotions of remorse and gratitude I survey this chasm. O! Emma, how differently life looks, prospectively or retrospectively. After it pleased God to restore my reason, I wasted years of responsible life in helpless misery, and profitless repining.

"I tormented myself with vain and endless efforts to solve the mysteries of life—the mysteries of my life! Were my calamities retributions? Was it a God of love and mercy who thus visited the rashness, ignorance, presumptuousness of a girl of seventeen? The vengeance of the heathen deities seemed not more cruel to me than his who had permitted my children to be dashed against a stone. No light entered my soul; but, as when with a diseased eye you look at the

sun, a black image falls wherever you direct your eye—so I saw nothing in life but struggle, misery, blasting. I ceased to resist the conviction of universal, unmitigated evil. I was paralyzed by despair. I was truly the skeleton in my father's house—an image of woe that turned all the cheerful uses of life to sadness. His friends urged him to send me back to the asylum. My poor mother was worn out with me, and kept up a continual simmering of vexation. This was no more to me than the complaining of a kitten in a tempest. Thus I went on till it seemed as if there was not a spark of love left in my soul to be kindled by God's mercies. But love is the immortal spark, and however overlaid and obstructed, a divine breath restores its energy, and it consumes in its pure and holy flame all evil, and revitalizes our whole being. While there seemed neither light nor heat in me, my soul was touched by a sense of my father's sweet patience with me. He not only never spoke a rebuke or remonstrance, but whenever he spoke to me his voice was mellowed with compassion, and often I met his eye moistened with an infinite tenderness. One day I had returned in a state of mind more than usually irritated with Providence, and abhorrent of life, from a habitation of wretchedness, for my conscience scourged me now and then to acts of charity, and I was sitting before the fire, my arms folded, and my veil down, my soul in an attitude of defiant despair, when my father came in—gently removed my veil, kissed me, and pressed my cheek to his. Suddenly, like a ray of light, those words darted athwart my mind, 'If your earthly father so love you, how much more your heavenly Father?' I threw my arms around my father and wept on his bosom—for the *first* time since my children were brought home dead to me, I felt the relief of tears. I rushed to my room—I fell on my knees—I uttered no word of confession or prayer. My mind was opened, and light entered. The Bible which I had

pored over and felt as if it were all words—words—words —was now bright with divine effulgence. I read it with my mind's eye, as well as with my bodily organs. I saw how the holy men of old held fast their faith through all trial and tribulation. I received Job's sublime words, 'though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' thus accepting God's mysterious dealings with him, and repelling the abortive metaphysical arguments of his earthly comforters—poor groundlings! Passage after passage from David's lips dropped into my melted heart. The prophets seemed to bear me over the dark ocean of life with their strong wings, and, dear Emma, I laid myself down at the feet of Jesus, and became as a little child, receiving without questioning or doubt the teaching of his words and life. I was possessed with a peace which I can not describe to you. No matter now how profound the mysteries of life. They were sealed up—I knelt upon them and looked up with the eye of faith. The exultation of my mind of course subsided, but the religious trust and peace remains. It is not what we find life, but what it makes of us, that is the great question we are to solve. I came out of my tribulation with my heart overflowing with gratitude. Duty did not appear to me a stern teacher; for him who trusts and believes, she has a smiling aspect and carries in her hand a cornucopia of blessings. I no longer weary my mind and burden my heart with an attempt to solve the mysteries of life. God is good. He loveth us as a father loveth his children. He has sent his beloved Son to reiterate the great truths revealed by nature, and providence; and though it be evident, my dear Emma, that happiness is not our normal state, yet we have occasional joys, bright passages enough to give us a conviction of the capacity of our nature, and to confirm the hope of its future destiny.

"Such joy is mine, late gleaner as I am in God's field, when I am permitted to do some unexpected good. Such

joy was mine yesterday, when I stood at the font, sponsor for my brother John's little girl Eleanor, and consecrated to her a portion of all that remains of my health and strength, so long abused and wasted by a sinful excess of grief."

As Eleanor silently folded this letter, Grace, after looking steadfastly in her sister's face, said, "Now one riddle is solved for me, Eleanor, and I know why it is that you are of the celestial, and I of the terrestrial: your childhood was passed with this heavenly aunt of ours, while I, left to earthly influences, as you know, though you may never have the bad boldness to say so, have made wings for myself, which *I* know will melt off in the first fiery trial, and leave me to sink, poor mortal as I am! But how sorry I am I did not comprehend our heavenly-minded aunt."

"And I think, Grace, I loved her without comprehending her. Every day interprets to me her earnest life and teaching; it will be a great reproach to me if I am not the better for it. Will you have any more of the letters, or are you tired? Here is a very old one, that seems to be all about Uncle Walter."

"Uncle Walter! there's music in his name. Yes, read it. I hope it is about his marriage; that part of his life seems as much lost out of it, as the lost tribes of the Jews to their brethren."

"Yes, it is of his marriage. The letter begins:"

"Dear Emma:—

"The rumor you heard (and heard before we did, so complete is our retirement from the world) is confirmed. Walter announced his engagement, in his own way, last evening. 'Do you know,' he asked my mother, 'whom Augustus Dawson married?'

"'I have heard,' replied my poor mother, with a certain

compression of her lips, which in spite of me always reminds me of the 'Honorable Mr. Delville.' 'I dare say she was a Brown, or a Smith—I never remember such names. She was nobody.' 'I am sorry for that,' replied Walter, 'for I propose to make his daughter, Miss Dawson, somebody, by giving her your name—with your approbation, and my father's.'

"'Not with mine, Walter—never—I remember now, Dawson married a Winal; I never could bring myself to consent to your marrying a grand-daughter of Dicky Winal.'

"'Vinal, if you please, madam. (Poor mamma always transposes her V's and W's, though Walter never lets slip a chance of correcting her.) You do recall the name?' 'Yes, it came like a blow. Dicky Winal was a tallow-chandler—all our family bought candles of him.' 'And "our family," my dear mother, being addicted to lighting their candles at both ends, Mr. Richard Vinal died richer than any of the "Sir Harry's" or "Sir John's," to whom, as I have learned from you, we have the honor of being distantly related.'

"'Well, well, Walter, if we are not rich as they, we are not poor enough to want any of their greasy money.'

"'No, madam, that article always retains enough of its slippery quality to glide away from our hands.' While Walter talked with this levity to my mother, his eyes glanced to my father, who at the first word he had spoken had thrown down his newspaper, and risen from his chair, and leaning his elbow on the mantel, had fixed his sweet radiant eye anxiously on Walter. 'You were trifling, my son,' he said: 'it is all badinage.'

"'No, pardon me, my dear father, I am in earnest. But as my Fanny is not the grand-daughter of the tallow-chandler, but is a daughter of Mr. Dawson's first wife, and grand-daughter of William Delancy, my mother's friend in those

happy days when we were King George's subjects, I hope—'

"'Hope! yes, indeed, that you may—I might have known you were fooling, Walter. Dicky Winal, indeed!'

"'Vinal, madam.'

"'What does it signify what you call such trumpery? Why I might have known. Nanny Jones told me at Christmas that Dawson had brought his wife's daughter from England. How lucky she has been living with English gentry! Of course she will have nothing to do with the second brood—Winal's grand-children.'

"'Vinal's, my dear mother.'

"'Yes—dear me, Walter! yes, Winal's. But Fanny will inherit equally with them?'

"'Probably not. She will have nothing in common with the second brood,' you know, dear mother. Dawson is a just man, and will so far respect the rights of his children as to transmit to them the fortune produced by the candles. No. My Fanny's crest is that which fits most of our Tory gentry—an empty purse. You say nothing, my dear father. May I bring her here to-morrow for your blessing?'

"'Certainly, Walter. I trust you have duly considered this matter. We have already suffered from haste. (I caught the words, though he depressed his voice.) This is the great event of your life, my son. Every other takes color from it. You are not a boy to be governed by impulses —by love at first sight.'

"'I am not, and this is *not* my first-love,' he said, with such a tone and emphasis that we all started and turned our eyes to him. He started too, as if self-betrayed, and then coming up to me he pressed me to his bosom with a tenderness the more affecting that he is undemonstrative; 'you need not speak, my dear sister,' he said, 'these cold little hands say too much.' I tried to speak cheerily, but could

not. I feel like a thing of ill omen in all times of gladness.

"Walter settled it with my father that he would bring his Fanny to us the next morning at twelve. Twelve o'clock came, and one, and not Walter. My father was annoyed—nothing vexes him more than a failure of punctuality, but he suppressed his impatience, and, in the kindness of his gentle heart, seeking an apology for Miss Fanny, he said, 'hours are later in England than with us.'

"'Yes,' said my mother, who never loses an occasion of lauding any thing English, 'and their customs are so much better than ours, that I wish we could introduce them all here.'

"'That would be about as sensible,' replied my father, 'as to dress a boy in his grandfather's clothes—but here they are!' and Miss Fanny entered, in very elegant walking costume, leaning on Walter's arm. She came in as she would have entered any other drawing-room on any other occasion—neither bold, nor timid. My father would have taken her in his dear old arms, but she prevented this by gracefully turning her cheek for a salutation. I knew the current of paternal feeling suffered a sudden congelation. Just then, a knot of ribbon attached to Miss Dawson's ruff dropped. She took it from Walter's hand, adjusted it, and *afterwards*, with a sort of conventional smile, received my mother's and my kiss.

"Perhaps I give significance to mere trifles: Walter seemed satisfied—delighted even; and my brother Walter is a keen observer of the foibles of our sex. He has been too fond of quoting from Pope, and the writers of his day, the biting satires upon the mass of women who have 'no characters at all.'

"While mamma was calling up all the dead Delancys from her memory, many more than Fanny Dawson had ever heard of, my father sat perusing the young lady with his

soft eye (not a very intricate reading, Emma!) and I sat silent, my eyes steadfast on my work. Of late years, whenever I feel emotion, a kind of numbness comes over my organs—life and heat seem concentrated at my heart. My friends know I am not the petrefaction I seem. How others judge me, it does not matter. Walter was disturbed at the impression I was making on Miss Dawson. 'Have you made a vow to finish that blanket for Nelly while we sit here, Mrs. Silborn?' he asked. I looked up from my embroidery, stammering an apology. 'Mrs. Silborn! dear me!' exclaimed Miss Fanny. 'Why, Mr. Herbert, you did not tell me your sister was married! I am enchanted—do you know I detest old maids—don't you Mrs. Herbert?'

"'Yes, my dear, they are so inconvenient.'

"'Just what mamma says!—one never knows where to put them, and there are so many in England! Dear Mrs. Silborn, I am sure I shall love you—and we shall be such friends, both married ladies—what a sweet blanket you are embroidering! I will come again to-morrow to see your baby—I am so fond of babies! Is Mr. Silborn absent?' She had turned the creaking hinges to sorrows never alluded to in my family. Do not imagine I burst into tears. We were all silent, even my mother, and the young lady becoming conscious there were broken chords in the instrument she had so rudely handled, reminded Walter of an engagement, and after again surveying herself in the glass and seeing that all was right, she made a graceful exit.

"'She is a very pretty young lady,' said my father, as the door closed after them—'very, very,' as if by reiteration he could satisfy his desire that she were something more. My mother took up the words heartily—'pretty, beautiful! my dear; so high-bred too, such aristocratic features! I should know her for a Delancy any where, so English! I am glad she has escaped their embonpoint.'

"'Don't use French words, my dear,' said my father, testily, for him; 'you don't speak French well.'

"'French!' exclaimed mamma; 'I am sure that's English; I have heard it a thousand times in English.' (Poor mamma.)

"'Ah well, my love,' said my father, reverting to his usual equanimity, 'it is not your word, but your sentiment I quarrel with. Embonpoint is the sign of health, and you and I have lived long enough to know that health is the foundation of energy, contentment, cheerfulness, and of whatever makes life either useful or pleasant. You, my dear, are a pattern of the *embonpoint*.' And thus the scene was rounded off with this little conjugal compliment.

"O, Emma, is this Fanny Dawson Walter's *ideal?*—my rational, strong-minded brother! 'We know what we are, but we know not what we shall be!' Is all love a mere enchantment? and did Shakespeare mean so to symbolize it in his 'Midsummer's Night's Dream?'

"I have heard men—sensible, philosophic men—explain the hideous disparities in marriage, by quietly receiving it as an ordination of Providence that it should be so—in order that, by an amalgamation of the tall and the short, the fat and the lean, the wise and the foolish, the good and the bad, an average might be sustained. I do not believe a word of it. I have more reverent notions of God's providence. I believe that God instituted marriage, to produce in that relation, as in all others, the highest happiness and the purest virtue, and that the fearful disorders and imperfections of the condition are not of his ordination, but produced by the passions, the prejudices, the ignorance, and weakness of men and women. Ambition, greed, govern; an accident, an overpowering vanity, a whim, a fancy, sets the seal on life! When men buy houses or lands they take counsel; when they buy a horse, or add a cow to their herd, they ask a friend's advice; but in the great

affair of life, that which makes the life of life, they seek no oracle.

"I rather think that a want of true respect for women lies at the root of the mistake Walter is making, and of many marriage wrecks, as far as men are concerned; and with us —poor women—dear Emma, we suck in with our mother's milk love-fancies, to be distilled upon the first man that crosses our path, and makes love to us after we are sixteen; and till then and always, we are taught by books, by all the talk we hear from old and young, married and single, that marriage is not only the felicity of woman, but that her dignity, her attractiveness, her usefulness depends on it; that in short it is a *sine quâ non*—the choice of the alternative is never to be thought of. The sphinx in the desert has not a more dreary, hideous solitude to the imagination of a girl, than the old maid, who must pass through the world without the whispers of love, or any of the rich appliances of married life. So that marriage becomes not only their heaven, but an escape from—, the word is not for 'ears polite,' dear Emma; and women go to the altar, and vow love, honor, and obedience, and priests require this vow, of impossible performance by the mere volition of the maker. 'Obey' we may the sternest, most unreasonable commands; but the love and honor depend upon the partner in this portentous partnership. There is no anguish, Emma—I speak from experience—I am sure there can be none in any state of penal misery, to surpass that inflicted by severe disparities in married life; and, with my own still open wounds, I say sincerely that I believe there is no felicity exceeding that of happy married love. You can not wonder that the marriage of any one I love fills me with dread. I can not help it. Memory has killed hope. I remember how I rushed into the paradise of my imagination. How soon the

flowers were blighted, and trailing in the dust! How soon the fruit was blasted!

"I can not account for this fancy—it is not *love*—of Walter's betraying him to such serious consequences. A man, like my brother, to be caught by the sparkle of this little brilliant! Does that first love, that he so inadvertently confessed, explain it? He has seemed singularly indifferent to the attractions of women ever since he left college. Perhaps he has been disappointed in some fervent, earnest, youthful passion, and then, as men do, when the time comes to choose between the married man and the sorry bachelor, he has suffered himself to be the sport and the victim of an accident. He should have sought a woman who would be the friend of his maturity, who could sound the depth of his affections, give impulse to his highest aspirations, be his counselor in perplexity, and then stand behind him with the gentleness and self-renunciation of a loving wife. Instead of this, Emma—but I do not know Fanny Dawson. She may prove something very different from the pretty shallowness she seems. God grant she may sustain that love which is the element of life, from turret to foundation-stone, and heaven pardon my foreboding, that Walter's structure will fall at the first strain.

"My brother's is a most noble nature, Emma, but he is indolent, and lets times and accidents master him. Dear Walter, I tremble for you when you come to want the companionship of a friend, the buoyancy and infinite ingenuity of a true woman's love—when children come to be trained for earth and heaven—when the saddest exigences of life arrive, or, what is perhaps more dangerous to happiness, when its familiar prosperities become stale and *ennuyantes;* then—but, dear brother, I will not be your Cassandra!

"It is because I reverence the marriage compact that I would not have it lightly made. God knows how I rever-

ence it; how it bound my conscience to every possible sacrifice; how, in obedience to it, I turned all my means from the natural channels of my affections, to feed and clothe my miserable husband, and to answer his insatiable demands. I was with him, Emma, for many hours of every day during the last months of his loathsome life, in the wretched lodging to which, in spite of my supplies, he had reduced himself. Neither my words nor my prayers penetrated the obstructions of his dimmed senses and clouded mind. I could not comfort him; but I appeased my conscience, which forever reiterated to me my rash marriage vows."

Eleanor kissed the letter, and reverently refolding it, returned it to the file.

Mrs. Silborn's letters had thoroughly awakened Grace's interest. She left her drawings, and insensibly slid down on the cushion beside Eleanor. Another file of their aunt's letters was taken out, and each sister eagerly opened and read them, passing their eyes over family events which they already well knew—such as their grandmother's death, the particulars of their grandfather's long decline, "the going down of that sun which," as their aunt wrote, "had preserved a course of serene beneficence from its dawn to its setting," etc., etc.

"How I wish," said Grace, "that I could find something more about dear Uncle Walter. It is always just so, the moment people are married they are passed over with mere hints and allusions. Ah! here Aunt Sarah says: 'Walter's wife is exceedingly admired. Walter brought her here to exhibit a rose-colored Parisian dress, before going to General M.'s ball. Mamma was in raptures. "She does look lovely," said my father, as they left the room, and sighed. I sighed, too, Emma.'

"Here again: 'Fanny says she has worn all her dresses twice, and she shall go out no more. "What should I go for," she says, "when I have no more new dresses? it's so tiresome! No one cares for a married woman."'"

"Ah!" cried Eleanor, "here is something better: 'Fanny is becoming a devoted mother; every faculty of her nature seems resolved into the maternal instinct. I don't think Walter quite likes being so soon superseded.'"

Letter after letter was explored, but no mention of Mrs. Herbert for three years.

"Of course she has become a nonentity," said Grace.

"No, Grace," said Eleanor, "here, in a letter, of four years later date, Aunt Sarah says: 'You inquire about Walter's boys. I am sorry to say they are puny little things, petted and pampered by their weak mother, seldom allowed to breathe fresh air, and in the doctor's hands six days out of seven. Is it not strange that Walter, with his sense, should submit to this? Poor fellow, he takes refuge from the inanities of his home at "the club," and thus he neither manfully cures, nor patiently endures, the evil.'"

"I can not find a mention of Aunt Fanny's name again," said Grace, running her eye over several letters.

"There was little to say," replied Eleanor; "the poor little boys died, as I have heard from Aunt Sarah, before they were four years old, and Aunt Fanny, after a few years of invalidism—not life, nor quite death—followed them."

"Oh, I remember her death!" exclaimed Grace, "and remember perfectly feeling a little ashamed of Uncle Walter that he did not cry; and saying to him—from my infancy I have spoken out my heart to him—'Why don't you cry, Uncle Walter? Papa did dreadfully, when mamma died!' I shall never forget his look and answer: 'I am no dissembler, Gracie!' I went straight to the library, and looked out the

word in Johnson, and since then I have never spoken to him of Aunt Fanny. Eleanor," she continued, after a few moments' brooding, "these family annals reveal a cruel destiny —a fate hangs over us all. There was our great-hearted grandfather married to the tenth dilution of a woman; Aunt Sarah wedded to a sensual brute, and Uncle Walter to a fool!"

"But, Grace, it was of free will—not fate!"

"And you have no fears. I have. With the freest will in the world, I have a perfect terror of fate. But what are you smiling at, Eleanor? For pity's sake, if any thing has turned up in Aunt Sarah's letters to smile at, let's have it."

"I have just lighted upon something that comes a little nearer home to you and to me."

She read aloud:

"My brother William was wise in allotting to Walter, in his will, a suit of apartments in his house. This secures to the girls Walter's protection, and to him the infinite comfort of their companionship. Between him and Grace there is growing a strong affection, founded in congenial natures, with the authority and respect of the parental and filial tie, softened by the consciousness, on both sides, that the duties are voluntary. I do not admit the affection is stronger than that which subsists between Eleanor and myself, but there is ever a raciness imparted by difference of sex, and besides Grace will always keep the current of her loves more agitated and more sparkling than Eleanor."

Eleanor paused.

"Read on," said Grace; and she proceeded.

"My dear Emma, I look forward to this child's future with painful anxiety—"

"Of course she did; but go on, I can bear it."

"I can leave my little Ellen tranquilly, whatever may be her destiny in life. There is a principle of spiritual development in her that clouds will but nurture. Poor Grace is a tropical plant, capable of rich growth and marvelous beauty, but exposed to volcanic perils. She is so deeply stamped by nature, that neither time nor custom will wear out the impression. She is capable of soaring higher than my Eleanor, and will always be capable of feats, but never of dear Nelly's patient continuance in well-doing. Grace has an intensity manifested in hot loves and hot hates. This is all innocent enough now—she is but eleven—but will it not impair the ripened woman? Eleanor will inherit the earth, which I take to mean the spiritual harvests that life yields, and which those only reap who have moderate expectations, disciplined tempers, unexacting affections, and subdued wills. Poor Grace will reach heaven at last, but through much tribulation."

"Stop, Ellen—stop!" cried Grace; "Aunt Sarah is dreadful. I can't have her spin out the black thread of my destiny, and besides, I do not honestly think that our good aunt quite comprehended me."

"Aunt Sarah died when you were but thirteen, Grace, and surely you have the best of it. She carries you to heaven, and leaves to me only the inheritance of the earth."

"An inheritance, Eleanor, that is sure to take you through the beaten track of all the beatitudes up to the third heaven. But come, is there more? I believe, after all, Aunt Sarah was a seeress; let's have it."

"It's all much in the same strain," replied Ellen, about to refold the voluminous letter.

"Ah, I see how it is, Miss Eleanor; let me have it—it won't try *my* modesty."

Grace read aloud:

"Eleanor has not her sister's personal or mental brilliancy —'a sop to Cerberus,' exclaimed Grace—'but she has that equal temperament that is not liable to disturbances. Her clear mind mirrors every thing definitely, and in true proportions. Grace's is the glassy lake, reflecting with intense brightness, but darkened by every cloud that flies over it, and tossed by gusty winds and giving back shifting shadows.' Eleanor is trained in self-sacrifice—'I am the trainer, no doubt'—and her activity and industry—she is the busiest of little bees—will preserve her from the self-created miseries of the nervous, sickly women that afflict domestic life.

"How tenacious are the affections, dear Emma. Mine, wrenched as they were, have taken root again in Eleanor. The maternal instincts have made a channel for themselves, as they will, for they are the ruling force of a woman's nature. It is not necessary to have borne a child to love it with a mother's perceptive, anxious, relying fondness. The affections are not dependent on the instincts, though they be best adapted to the conservation of the race, and its general happiness."

"Aunt Sarah is getting sententious, and prosy," said Grace, "but proceed."

"To return to the children. They illustrated their different qualities in their reception of their step-mother. Eleanor was ten, Grace but seven when William married Mrs. Carlton. My brother asked me to prepare the girls for this event. When I told them, Eleanor turned fearfully pale, put her arm clingingly around me, and laid her head on my

shoulder. She did not speak. Grace went off into a passion of grief and indignation. 'A new mother!' she exclaimed; 'Mrs. Carlton dare not call herself my mother; my mother lives, though we can not see her; you told me so yourself, Aunt Sarah. How dare papa? Mrs. Carlton can't be my mother. I wish she were dead!' 'O, don't, Grace!' interposed Eleanor. 'Then, Eleanor, if that suits you better, I wish you and I were dead!' And so she went on till she was exhausted, but neither convinced nor subdued; and to this day, I believe, a step-mother is to her an unmitigable evil—'true! even to this day true, Aunt Sarah!'—to which all my sister-in-law's good sense and good temper has not reconciled her, so do her feelings overpower her reason. My wise, good little Eleanor admitted all I said of her father's right to marry again, and of the requirements of her filial duty; and she went to it with the determination to live as she will wish to have lived when she comes to die."

"O Eleanor, how completely you have carried out the principles Aunt Sarah implanted! Your present gilds your future, and there is a glowing twilight in your past. Such prospective, retrospective goodness is marvelous to me! But what does Aunt Sarah say of that horrible slough of Mrs. Herbert's advent?—how well I remember it."

"The girls were sad enough when their step-mother came, but Ellen's was a gentle inoffensive sadness, and involuntary c'inging to sweet filial memories. Poor little Grace seemed resenting a personal indignity—an irreparable injury, and to this day, whatever Mrs. Herbert proposes goes counter to her grain, while Eleanor, 'ceasing to resist, ceased to suffer,' and coöperating in the somewhat tedious perfection of Mrs. Herbert's domestic economy, the harmonies of her nature were not disturbed. Duty did the work of love. Poor

Grace is in a state of perpetual annoyance, fretted by her step-mother's foibles, and feeling the bitterness of being fretted by them, for she has a clear self-discernment. Fortunately, my sister-in-law has too serene a temper, and perhaps a little too much self-complacency, to perceive Grace's irritations. She honestly thinks both the girls love her, and fancies that Grace with any one else might be irascible, but that she knows how to manage her!"

"O!" cried Grace, "I am the same child yet: her sweet brings out all my acid. I have traveled all the way from seven to eighteen without learning any thing. I shall never be wiser."

"Do not say so, dear Grace," said Eleanor, interposing, as a kind-hearted person is too apt to, to fend off the arrows of conscience; "this very morning, at breakfast, I was admiring your self-command in making no retort when Mrs. Herbert so elaborately lauded Horace Copley, contrasting him with his aristocratic manners, and elegant taste in dress, with Frank Esterly."

"My dear, simple Eleanor, I was pleased with what she said. Mr. Esterly piqued me last evening. He tossed over my finest drawings without saying one word about them. No, I am not deceived. I know myself. You deserved to be Aunt Sarah's favorite. You were papa's—mamma's—you are mine, dear Eleanor," she cried, her face irradiating, and throwing her arms around her sister; "I love you a thousand times better than I love myself."

"You are more generous than just," said Eleanor, returning her sister's embrace. "It is not true—I am not the favorite of all our family. Uncle Walter loves you immeasurably more than he loves me."

"That is true, I think. Yes, I admit that. Dear old Uncle Walter! We are a good deal alike—he and I. We

hate monotony, even in goodness. He groans—if he does not groan aloud, as I do, under Mrs. Herbert's infinite tediousness. We are both sinners, and repenters. Poor dear Uncle Walter! I am afraid he is no more judicious in his loves than he was twenty years ago. Can't you find any more scraps in the letters about him?"

"Yes, here is one:—'You say, dear Emma, that you were both surprised and glad to see Walter looking so well and bright after the loss of his little boys. You do not know Walter. He is like those citadels kept well manned and in stern outward order when there is starvation within. I should call my brother a Christian stoic, if there were any thing in Christianity so hard and egotistic as stoicism. When his poor, pampered, doctored children fell, within one week, a prey to the first serious disease that attacked them, he made no lamentation, but he looked blasted, and in a month wasted to a skeleton. I once said to him, "Walter, God does not willingly grieve or afflict you." He replied with a calm voice of deep conviction, "Sarah, I am not deceived, I do not accuse Providence: 'as ye sow, so shall ye reap.' When I took for a mother to my children, a woman without sense, without any just notions of life, without health, without one of the essential qualifications for the highest and holiest office of a woman, what should I have expected?—just what has come to pass. As I sowed, so have I reaped. Poor Fanny! poor Fanny! I pity her from the bottom of my heart. She, and you, and I, Sarah," and he pressed my hand with a desperate gripe, "are all victims." "Of our own weakness and ignorance," I said. "In part, Sarah, in part," he replied; "but what have our religious teachers done to rectify, and counteract the false notions and false usages of society? Did our parents implant the views and principles on which the most important of all relations should be based? No, we were left to whim—to accident

—to the feverish dreams of youth—and here we are—here we are—God help us!" and he rushed out of the room, and left me crying bitterly. It was the first and last he ever said to me on the subject. A few months passed. Walter locked his secret griefs in his heart, and kept the key himself. In outward seeming he was the same man he had always been, noble, thoughtful for others, careless for himself, sometimes wise, and sometimes far otherwise. I can not bear a harsher censure of one whose nature is so composed of all that sweetens, and vitalizes life—tears are due to his infirmities, not censure, Emma!'"

"O, Eleanor!" exclaimed Grace, "how strange that a man like Uncle Walter should go on so unchanged in character, so changed in circumstances. Just as he was when he married Aunt Fanny—when his children lived—when they died—when he lived in his own house on the Battery in open-door hospitality—just so he now is, living with only a bedroom and a little parlor, in our third story, and with just a pittance to pay his bills. Let's shut up the trunk. I am tired of it. Stop! what is this you have left out? A pocket-book marked with grandpapa's name—if there should be a treasure in it?"

She unclasped the pocket-book, and exclaimed, "There is! there is! a letter from Uncle Walter—the single letter of his life, I think, for I never heard of his putting pen to paper. Bless us! written—oh, how long ago—when he was in Yale College."

Grace began to read aloud.

"My Dear Father:—"

"But, Grace!" interposed Eleanor, "is this quite right? We should ask Uncle Walter's leave—there may be a secret."

"A college-boy's secret, ages ago. Eleanor, you are too absurdly scrupulous. I'll confess and take all the blame."

Grace read aloud.

"My Dear Father:—

"My filial duty and my unlimited confidence in both your justice and generosity would have induced long since the communication I am about to make, but it was deferred by the griefs my sister's calamities brought upon you. I could not then add another bitter drop to your full cup. I must no longer delay. Six months since—"

"O, stop there, Grace," cried Eleanor, spreading her hand over the page, "we must not read another word."

"No, we must not," replied Grace, hurriedly refolding the letter; "but is it not too bad, just as we perceived the flavor of the apple, and had our teeth upon it? How much better we are than Eve! I always thought her a remarkable specimen of human infirmity." Grace, looking again at the seal and at the superscription, tossed it into the trunk, saying, "Lock the trunk, Eleanor, and hide the key from me, lest at some weak moment—. No, no, hand me the letter. I will give it to Uncle Walter; he'll not object to my reading it—it concerns some college prank, or some transient love-madness. Perhaps it is that 'first love' alluded to in Aunt Sarah's letter?"

"Most likely; Uncle Walter was not the kind of man to repeat his loves."

"I don't know that. I have heard him say men have forty before they marry, and I believe him."

"I do not, Grace; I have more faith in man's loyalty."

"Of course, Eleanor; being yourself made after the divine pattern—knowing no variableness. Don't look so

solemn, I mean no irreverence. I'll refer it to our clerical oracle—perhaps you don't know whom I mean?"

"I do."

"Ah, you do!" Both sisters smiled. "I'll ask Mr. Esterly, then," continued Grace, "and if he sees a mote in my eye—why, I'll clutch at the beam in his."

"What do you mean, Grace?"

"He was admiring the harmonious proportions of your character, my dear; the admirable consistency of your conduct; and I said it was not then quite so absurd as I had imagined, in Miss Hannah More to send forth her knight errant, 'Cœlebs in Search of a Wife,' with the motto, 'Expect not perfection, but look for consistency!' Without listening to me, he murmured, as if ruminating on his own thoughts, 'Montaigne says that perfect consistency is to be expected alone of Omnipotence.'

"Eleanor!

> "'Quel vago impallidor che 'l dolce riso,
> D'un amorosa nebbia ricopersi!'"

Eleanor's face was, indeed, covered with a rush of blushes and smiles, quickly changing to paleness and gravity. It was such a change as might chance to a Turkish lady's face, from whom her lover had torn her veil. But Eleanor's heart was still impenetrably veiled from her sister's eye; and when a servant opened the door, and said, "Mr. Esterly is below, Miss Eleanor;" "Did he ask only for Miss Eleanor, John?" she inquired.

"Yes, Miss, and no mistake."

"That's odd!" said Grace. "Ah! now I recollect—he told me he was coming to ask you, Eleanor, to take a class in his Sunday-school, or sewing-school, or some such parochial affair. If he asks for me to go on with our Petrarch,

tell him I am engaged. I don't feel like it; my heart is in that old green trunk."

Though Grace fancied her interest was monopolized by one subject, she set the door ajar, and listened eagerly for Esterly's retiring footsteps; and when her sister, after a long delay, returned, she said: "Have you been all this time arranging your Sunday-school, Eleanor?"

"Mr. Esterly came to ask me to take a class in it," she replied.

"Did he seem offended that I put him off?"

"O, forgive me, Grace, I forgot to tell him."

"And he forgot to ask! Of course, he was offended, or hurt, or something of that sort. Lovers—I don't mean that, but—he is so sensitive. Eleanor, how you flush to-day. Our step-mother is right for once; she says you are not well; that you are getting nervous with all these schools and societies. She says Mr. Esterly imposes on you. Do not look so injured—it was her remark, not mine. She said, with her usual jealousy for you—you angel! you are never jealous for yourself—that while Mr. Esterly spent hours dawdling over the piano with me, and reading Italian, if there were work to do, he turned it over to you." She paused, and, as if uttering the result of her consideration, she added, "I wonder if all men commit the folly of preferring 'le beau à l'utile!' Ah! if Frailty's the name of woman, Presumption is the name of girl."

CHAPTER II.

"With prudence ever ready at our call,
To guide our use of it, is all in all."

We reckon the hours made happy by the presence of some people. Does it ever occur to us to reckon those made happy by the absence of some other people? On the evening after the reading of the old letters, Eleanor and her sister were sitting together in Mrs. Herbert's drawing-room. "Blessings on him who invented the opera, as Sancho says of sleep," said Grace; "four evenings this week it has relieved us from Anne. She kills the atmosphere for me!" Grace was *anti-sympatica* to Miss Anne Carlton, her stepmother's daughter, a young lady about her own age, and a type of a class of young ladies who vegetate in our society. The class is easily described: their individuality requires a mental microscope. She was educated at a fashionable boarding-school, where learned and excellent professors, each in his allotted sixty minutes, like a bit of India rubber, effaced from Miss Anne's mind, as from all but exceptional absorbents, what his precedent had put in. She was a "perfect French scholar," as the phrase goes; that is, she could write a French note with the natural grace of the language, and was versed in current phrases on common topics, which she spoke with a very tolerable accent for an outside barbarian: (that is, for one who has never seen Paris); and certainly she read French—French novels—with far more facil-

ity than she did any thing English. She excelled in music, but as she held it vulgar to play in society, her professor's word must be taken for that. But Miss Anne had accomplishments that no one could dispute. Her toilette was absolute perfection, so those versed in those "branches of learning" maintained. Her dresses, hats, and embroideries, were imported from the first artistes in Paris, and if her array did not surpass the "lilies of the field," it was not the fault of these great dynasties. She could detect, as well as an English lady's maid, an imitation lace, or fur, and feel almost as profound a scorn for the wearer too. Miss Anne was called "very clever" by her own clique, and she had rather a gift at a flippant repartee. She was very pretty too, tall, delicate, well-made—corsets and French art having done half the making—with very regular features, a fair complexion, and with that halo of fashionable glory, the "air distingué," which she very discreetly never impaired by the loud tones, and shouts, and pleasant shrieks, and rapid movements, and audacious pushings of our "fast young ladies." In short, to use the parrot-phrase of her society, Miss Carlton was "decidedly high-bred."

What "chief end" of woman such a creature is to answer in life, must be solved by a deeper philosophy than ours.

She was at the opera. Her mother was occupied with some ladies in her library, organizing a book-club after a model she had fallen in love with in Boston, during a recent visit to that emporium of literature. Mrs. Herbert was great at organizing.

"How I wish Uncle Walter would come in," said Grace; "we should have such a nice opportunity, this evening, to tease him out of his letter. No company—no fear of any. Ah! there he is; there's his dear old hobbling step. It speaks to my heart, and my heart answers. Not many foot-

steps have this magic—I am beginning to listen for the sound of Frank Esterly's." She looked archly at her sister. "But, Eleanor, I am not sure it speaks to my heart yet—*nous verrons*. Welcome, dear Uncle Walter." She drew his chair to the fire and put a footstool under his feet. "Now prepare for a siege," she said, "and a surrender—but what's the matter—are you not well?"

"Well—yes. But have you forgotten, child, that our everlasting lawsuit comes up to-morrow?"

"O, yes, I had forgotten it."

"And you, Eleanor?"

"No, uncle, I must confess to anxious thoughts of it twenty times to-day."

"You are a girl of some sense, Eleanor. Here is a cause to be decided to-morrow, which will make us very rich—or leave us—"

"Not very poor, Uncle Walter," said Grace; "we have enough, and more would only inflict on us more care and responsibility. Now, is not that as sensibly said as if my sister Eleanor had spoken it?"

"Upon my word, Grace, it is spoken to the purpose, and it reminds me of Esterly's last Sunday's homily. You take his sermons to heart, child."

"Perhaps I do—but the truth is, we have been up and down so many times with this interminable lawsuit, that to me it seems a mere idle play upon our fears and hopes."

"I trust, Grace, that your professed indifference is more sincere than Mr. Horace Copley's."

"Why more sincere, Uncle Walter? he talks about it as he would about the chance of a fair or foul day. He told me at Mrs. Stillman's matinée, that his only interest in its final settlement is, that he may never again see 'Copley *versus* Herbert.'"

"You *are* young, Grace." This exclamation was accompanied by a peculiar laugh of Uncle Walter's, which had a slight expression of derision.

"And I hope I shall die young," retorted Grace, "if I must become suspicious, distrustful, and unbelieving, as I grow older."

"Tut, tut, Grace! Mr. Horace Copley is undoubtedly the glass of fashion, and a most sweet-spoken and plausible young gentleman."

"Uncle Walter!"

"I really do not know that he has any other qualities to entitle him to your faith; to be sure he drives four-in-hand admirably; he rides almost as well as the gentry of the circus; he is the lover of married women, and the flatterer of young ladies. And yet, Grace, when he has contested for three years—point by point—a property that I believe in my soul rightfully belongs to us, and has been so ruled by three successive decisions, from which he has appealed, I can not—quite—trust him, Grace, when he assures you at a 'matinée musicale,' that he is indifferent to the result. He knows that we are not—you, and I, and Nelly—the only heirs of my father, living. A hundred, or a hundred and fifty thousand dollars will make a difference to us, though with his million or more, you may be imposed on by his matinée musicale declaration that he does not care a pin's head for such a trifle. No, no, my child, the richer men are, the more they covet, and if he does not crave the property—if that be possible—he desires the victory.

"His lawyer, Cranly, knows him thoroughly; he says Copley is a man of an unbending will. This is a mighty force—a steam power. If he has as yet applied it only to lifting the lid of a tea-kettle, he will move a ship with it, and shipwreck us; and with this inflexible purpose, he has a subtle, gentle, insinuating manner, that I don't like—"

"That you detest, you mean, Uncle Walter."

"Thank you, Grace, yes—I do—it's false—it's false."

No man was less addicted to vituperation than Walter Herbert. He unequivocally expressed his likings and dislikings, but usually merely by a turn of the eye, a motion of the lips, some scarcely articulate sound of pleasure, or displeasure: such an emission of words was as startling as a sudden shower in a drought.

"What has happened to trouble you, dear uncle?" asked Eleanor.

"That's just what I came home to tell you. Mr. Jones sent for me this afternoon. He is suddenly taken seriously ill. His going into court is out of the question—the cause must come on. It has already once lain over on account of a similar attack of his. The briefs are ready. Now the point to be decided is this: Jones has a junior partner—a young man of ability—destined to the head of his profession, Jones says. Well, this young man has had the preparation of our cause. He is thoroughly acquainted with our ground and our adversary's. He knows all the intricacies of the case through records, and traditions, etc., etc.—these land-titles are the devil and all to manage—and in short, though he has never argued a cause of magnitude, Jones inclines to our permitting him to go into court with it in preference to giving it to a practiced pleader, who can not, on so short a notice, become as perfectly familiar with its details as one who has worked them out. Besides this, Mr. Horace Copley has retained the best advocates in the city, with his precious indifference to the result. Forgive me, girls; I hate sham. What do you say, children? Will you trust the young man?"

"You and Eleanor must settle it between you," said Grace, with girlish pique. Her feathers had been a second time ruffled by her uncle's persevering disparagement of a

young man, who, though not her professed lover, had been marked in his admiration of her.

"Well, my dear, I rather think we are best qualified to settle it. What say you, Eleanor?"

"Have you seen the young man, uncle?"

"Yes."

"How does he impress you?"

"Why, at first—I don't mean at first, exactly, for I have often seen him in Jones's office, but he was always absorbed in business. I merely noticed a fine countenance, with too much in it to be worn thin and pale in a lawyer's office; but an hour ago, when I asked him if he were willing to go forward, he hesitated; I think it was the hesitation of true modesty and scrupulousness, not of timidity or self-distrust. There is a sparkle in his eye that indicates fire in his soul. I take to the young man greatly. He said that he was thoroughly familiar with the case, and too much interested in it to be, as he hoped, embarrassed by self consciousness; and it seemed to me very plain that it would gratify him to be trusted with the argument,—I incline to leave it in his hands."

Eleanor had not implicit faith in her uncle's discretion. "Can not we," she said, "learn something of his standing at the bar except from Counselor Jones's opinion? He may over-estimate him. What is his name?"

"What a jewel of prudence you are, my dear little Eleanor. His name, 'an it please you,' is Archibald Lisle."

"Archibald Lisle!" echoed both the girls in a breath.

"Yes, young ladies, 'Archibald—Lisle.' What is there startling in the name?"

"He was a classmate of Mr. Esterly's," replied Eleanor, blushing at a smile quivering on her uncle's lip, "and is his friend."

"Ah! and he is the friend of your friend, too, Grace?"

Grace did not reply immediately. She was wondering how it was that her sister should be acquainted with facts in Mr. Esterly's life that she was ignorant of; but returning to the point, she replied to her uncle: "O, all that I know about this young lawyer is, that he led me out to dinner at Mr. Jones's, where you know Mrs. Herbert dragged me. I may well remember him. He spilt a glass of claret over a new white silk dress! Eleanor restored it with her magical manipulation the next day, and so I forgot it. Poor fellow! he was so embarrassed by his blunder that he did not speak five words after it, though he had been very charming before, talking most agreeably. I told this to Horace Copley and Anne, who made game of his awkwardness; Miss Anne criticising the tie of his neckcloth, and Copley laughing at his frock-coat, and shambling gait, which he called the true 'lawyers' clerk's air.' O, now I recall him perfectly—a very fine face, lighting up as he spoke, and a dark gray, thoughtful eye, looking a little wearied, as if hard-worked; and when something pleased him, such a stream of light came pouring through it. Yes; give the cause to him by all means, Uncle Walter."

"Girls are odd fish," said Mr. Herbert, laughing; "I saw the young man half an hour ago, but I could not have described his eye so truly. And you, Eleanor, does the dark gray, thoughtful eye decide you, or Frank Esterly's friendship? or perhaps the friendship without the eye?"

"Whatever it is, uncle," replied Eleanor, "I am quite willing to trust the advocacy to Mr. Lisle."

"And so am I—"

"And so are we all—three pretty, verdant young folks together, the world will probably pronounce us." And probably would decree Uncle Walter the most spring-like and immature of the three, as he had been decided by an attraction to the young man indefinable to himself, one of those mys-

terious correspondencies which modern (soi disant) science calls magnetism.

He was hurrying out of the room, to communicate the decision to the young advocate, when Grace arrested him, and in her sweetest voice—its sweetest tone was a syren's to his ear—"Now, Uncle Walter," she said, "you can't go a step, if our bread depends on it, till you have granted me one favor."

"What you will, child—let me go. Whatever you have to ask, take it for granted I have said yes."

Grace snapped her fingers, and kissing him, cried, "That's enough—now go, dear old uncle."

"No, no, Grace—it is not enough," said Eleanor. "Stop, Uncle Walter—come back—one moment. We found a long letter of your's to-day in an old trunk of grandpapa's, that we were overlooking—"

"A long letter from me, child! It can't be; I never wrote a long letter in my life—never—but one," he added, his face suddenly clouding, "and that letter—surely my father did not preserve that? Where is the letter, Eleanor? Grace, where is it?"

Grace thrust her hand into her pocket, and produced it. He unfolded it and glanced at its contents, then crumpled it in his hand, and threw it in the grate. In a breath its substance vanished. "Type of my life," he said, in a low, mournful voice. Then crossing his hands behind him, he walked slowly to and fro. Pausing, and turning to his nieces, he added, "Ask no more questions, my children. There was nothing of any import to you in that letter; nothing to me—now. Its substance is written here," putting his hands on his bosom; "it has run a dark thread through my whole life. Sad, sad, are the results of our ignorance and our errors."

He wiped away the tears that gushed over his cheeks,

left the room, and slowly and heavily walked out of the house.

"Eleanor!" exclaimed Grace, "what can this mean? If we had but read a little further!"

"Thank heaven, that we did not, Grace."

"It was no discretion of mine, and therefore I can't thank heaven for it. It is not mere curiosity, Eleanor; Uncle Walter and I, you know, are the most intimate of friends. I can not bear to have a leaf in his life that I have not read, a fold in his heart hidden from me."

"There is not, dear Grace. It does not seem to me that the facts of our life are important; but the character that is formed from them. The herb is worthless after its essence is distilled."

"O, my dear sister reason, and religion. Well, I will try to follow in your shining footsteps, only I must pine to know what brought that shower of tears over Uncle Walter's dear old face."

CHAPTER III.

"There is grace in his lips."

Let us look into the apartment of a young lawyer preparing his first great case. The room is in the upper story of a lodging-house, comfortable and respectable, but without pretension to style or luxury of any sort. There is a forgotten fire in the grate, that, thanks to the enduring quality of anthracite, has not quite mouldered away. The apartment has the aspect of a careless bachelor's, and a devout student's. We will not impertinently explore drawers of unfolded vests, and odd gloves, or mark articles of apparel lying anywhere but where they should be. Sins of omission and commission against order were the inconvenient frailties of our friend. But these did not extend to his books and papers. As some priests apply their religion to their sacerdotal, and not at all to their secular life; so our young lawyer was fastidiously orderly in his professional and literary affairs. A moderate-sized book-case was filled with books and lexicons in various languages, indicating the wide horizon of his general culture, and a table at which he was sitting was covered with law books, briefs, and notes, carefully classed. There he sat, intently studying the points of his case till two o'clock in the morning, occasionally pacing his room, addressing the gentlemen of the jury in a voice that startled from their slumbers the women lodgers in the neighboring rooms, who, between their dreams and their fancies, made out an alarming tale for the next morning's breakfast.

After having put his law papers in his satchel with the confidence which only a man very young in the profession could entertain that there was not a chance against his clients, he took a sheet of letter paper, and opened a drawer containing his private correspondence. Therein was a file of letters from the good old father at home, filled with wise counsel, abundantly enforced with texts from the Old and New Testaments. Beside these, there were letters written in large round hand from little half-brothers—prodigious first efforts—thanking "brother Archy" for presents of books, and skates, etc., etc., etc., and a file of notes, delicate hair-strokes, every margin and corner filled with the lingerings of feminine love, and marked "From dear little Letty." The most bulky parcel was slipped into a morocco case, and inscribed "Arthur Clifford, *Abiit non Obiit.*"

Near this was a substantial file, written in a good, strong, old-fashioned hand, inscribed "From my dear mother-friend, Mrs. Clifford." Tucked into the same parcel were two or three notes in the ambitious chirography of a little girl, marked "Dear little Alice." Beside these last was an unfiled letter, which Archibald Lisle opened, and answered as follows:—

"My Dear Mrs. Clifford:—

"I am going into court to-morrow to advocate, for the first time, a cause of importance, and to secure or lose for my clients real estate in the upper part of the city, likely to become of great value. I have explored titles a century back, when this property was a waste rocky field—now, a noble avenue bounds it. It was originally purchased by two gentlemen of the names of Herbert and Copley, and, singular enough, after various sales and transmissions, the controversy is now between descendants of the original purchasers, 'Copley *versus* Herbert.' My clients, the Herberts, are an

elderly gentleman, and two young ladies, who, though somewhat decayed in fortune, are yet of unquestioned aristocracy. Their progenitors belonged to the colonial gentry—there is still a remnant of that Israel. Mr. Herbert—Walter Herbert, Esq.—I have seen repeatedly. He is a fine old fellow, tall, still erect, and robust, with thick hair of silver sable, an eye like an eagle, and a heart of gold. The young ladies are his nieces; one, a bright particular star, I have seen once only; but, once seen, she is never to be forgotten.

"My friend, Frank Esterly, is devoted to these lovely sisters, but which is the object of his pursuit I do not know, nor am I quite sure he would dare to raise his hopes to either. They are a constellation quite apart from the belles of the city got up by boarding-schools, and French milliners. You may wonder, my dear friend, that I dare take the responsibility of a suit of such importance, and for such parties. I have gone forward on the advice and recommendation of Counselor Jones, and on the conviction that I am better acquainted with the bearings of the case than another man can be, having studied and prepared it with infinite pains; and thus I have taken a bond of Fate, and made assurance doubly sure. Besides my professional zeal, I have the romantic aspiration of a champion of these fair dames; and to tell you the whole truth, I should like to foil this Horace Copley. He is an idle young man, with an immense inherited fortune, and, I am told, is reckoned the first prize in the matrimonial lottery of fashionable life here. He is an Apollo (in little) so elaborately exquisite in his dress, and all his appointments, that he is esteemed the glass of fashion. He is fastidious in his preferences among women, and only demonstrative to pretty married ladies, who are supposed to wear their bonds lightly. I have a dislike to his genus, and I confess to a personal pique against the man. I once dined in company with him. Miss Grace Herbert was one of the party. He

was hovering about her with the expectation, no doubt, of leading her to dinner. Our hostess assigned that honor to me. She is a brilliant, most captivating young woman, and I was just losing my shyness, forgetting my country-breeding and myself, when a lady on my right hand said something in a low tone to Copley. I heard only my name, and his reply, 'From New England; clever, I understand; but, as you see, a vulgar fellow. His frock-coat at a dinner-party betrays his style of life. He is the son of a mechanic.' 'Dear me!' exclaimed the young lady, 'how odd of Mrs. Jones to mix her company that way.' I had just filled my glass with claret. My hand trembled, the ruddy wine spilled over, and went rippling down Miss Herbert's lustrous silk. I stammered apologies. I half rose from my chair, dropped my knife and fork on the carpet, seized the unfortunate young lady's embroidered handkerchief, and did all that a bashful, blundering blockhead might to attract attention; and, to crown my confusion, I met Copley's eye. I shall never forget the supercilious sneer on his face. It was in vain that Miss Herbert was gracious and kind, and ready to laugh it off with a woman's ready wit. I could not recover myself. I was mute through the remaining courses, that seemed to me slow and solemn as a funeral procession, and when the ladies withdrew, I made my escape. When I came to myself I was thoroughly ashamed that Copley's impertinent malice should have moved me. I am proud enough of having my birth-right in New England, and God knows how I honor my 'mechanic' father, with, if I mistake not, a juster and nobler pride of birth than that of all the Howards. But, my dear Mrs. Clifford, there are atmospheric influences under which we take the world's coin at its own impress and estimate. I was young, and green, and so took Copley's, but once out of his presence I recovered my manhood, and trampled it under my feet. 'Why then,'

do you ask, 'do you retain so vivid a memory of it?' I confess it has left a scar, but I have graver grounds of dislike to the man. When I come to Mapleton, we will talk them over. In that dear rural district the cocks are crowing, and I must to bed, to dream of to-morrow's fight. My love to my 'dainty spirit, Eye-bright.' Do not let her grow out of her short dresses before I see her. Ah! I forget that she has leaped over three years since we parted, and that my 'little Alice,' is now fourteen."

The cause, Copley *versus* Herbert, was called, heard, and decided the next day, and decided against Lisle's clients. The contested property had passed through the hands of tories and refugees, it was complicated with the disputes preceding our Revolution, and entangled with the uncertain legislation relating to confiscated property subsequent to it. The modesty and faltering of the young advocate, in the beginning of his argument, did not promise the admirable clearness and precision with which he stated and maintained the points of his case, and his mastery of the law and precedents relating to it; and when he finished his plea, crowning his success with the rare graces of courtesy and candor, he sat down with the general belief of all the parties in the crowded court-room—except Copley and his lawyer—judge, jurors, and audience, that he had gained the victory.

But, alas! for the "glorious uncertainty of the law." The plaintiff's counsel produced evidence—which, with his characteristic, and often inexplicable love of mystery, Copley had concealed till now—of a transfer of the disputed property by an uncle of Walter Herbert's to a relative of Copley's, while they were both residing in England as tory refugees. This vitiated Lisle's evidence, and overthrew the argument based upon it.

"It was a scurvy trick," said Walter Herbert, "underground work. Good fellows, when they know they hold the honors, call out."

"Pardon me," said Copley, insinuating his way through the friends that encircled Walter Herbert, "you must exonerate me, sir. After we had agreed to refer the matter to the adjustment of a legal tribunal, it was my lawyer's duty to collect what evidence he could. I had nothing to do with it, and I regret the stubbornness of unexpected facts as much as you can." When Copley first spoke, Mr. Herbert started, as he might if a snake had crawled over his foot, and then fixing his open, honest eye upon the young man, he laughed in his throat a laugh peculiar to himself, and expressing a true man's contempt of subterfuge.

Copley's cheek blanched, and his lip quivered, but he had too much at stake to commit himself, and shrugging his shoulder, he said quietly, "As you please, sir," and withdrew.

"You were rather hard upon the young man," said one of Walter Herbert's friends to him.

"Tut, tut," he replied, "I know him."

"But," urged his friend, "if your niece is the lucky girl the world says, it will be all the same in the end. The money will only be in the right hand instead of the left, or *vice versâ*."

A black cloud came over Walter Herbert's clear brow, and he turned uneasily away, when his eye met Archibald Lisle's, and he pushed his way through the old cronies that surrounded him to where the young man stood, pensive and disappointed, and unheeding the compliments showered upon him. "You have gained your fortune, my dear fellow," he said heartily, "if we have lost ours." And then, dropping his voice, added, "Come and take your tea with us this evening, and you shall see we will hail your laurels, though we have lost the battle."

CHAPTER IV.

"Fortune has no weapon that reaches the mind."

Grace Herbert had not seen Archibald Lisle since the memorable day when he enacted second part to Goldsmith's bashful man. His blunders on that occasion had faded from her mind, while they had left an open wound in his memory, and it was that, much more than the failure of his advocacy, which caused his deep blush, and rather awkward embarrassment, when, after a generous heralding of "our young counselor," Mr. Herbert presented him to his nieces, saying, "You see they are cheerful losers; they know nothing of the power or value of money. How should they?"

"Indeed, how should we, Mr. Lisle," said Grace; "my uncle having been our teacher and exemplar through life?"

The look and the voice that had haunted the chambers of his memory for a year, electrified Lisle. This, and the presence of Mr. Esterly, put him (in mesmeric phrase) into relation with his new acquaintance, and made him appear to them the rare and charming young man he was. Frank Esterly and Lisle had been classmates at Cambridge, and friends since, though of late their intercourse had been interrupted by the assiduous devotion of each to his profession—their different pursuits leading them to different associations.

The lawsuit was playfully discussed, and disposed of. Uncle Walter interjected some rather biting sarcasms

against Copley, Eleanor gently interposing her shield, with the double purpose of turning the arrows from Copley and sheltering her sister. Grace, to a careless eye, might not have seemed sensitive to her uncle's criticisms, but in relation to her, Lisle's was not, even at this day-spring of their acquaintance, a careless eye.

The evening was passing away delightfully. They were certainly extraordinary parties in a lawsuit, whose gratitude for the masterly conduct of their cause was no wise impaired by its loss. "If you make such strides in your profession by losing a battle, Lisle," said Mr. Herbert, "what will you do when you gain one?"

"Thank you, Mr. Herbert; but in this kind of fight the combatant can not separate his own gain from the loss of the parties he contends for."

"No, a generous advocate can not. And I am satisfied, from my own observation, that in spite of the keen satires on lawyers, in spite of the vulgar bad opinion of them; in spite, too, of the disgraces accumulated by tricky pettifoggers and corrupt practitioners, yours is a profession that calls out the noblest qualities. I do not mean merely intellectual qualities—that no one disputes."

"You surely do not mean the highest moral qualities," interposed Esterly.

"But I do, though."

"Ah," replied Mr. Esterly, smiling, "you speak for your own craft, sir. I had forgotten that you were bred to the profession."

"I had nearly forgotten it, too. I studied law, and opened an office, but I have done nothing at it"—"and nothing in life," for so might be interpreted the sigh that followed. "I have had plenty of time for observation and speculation. I have known a generation of lawyers in this city, half passed away in mid-career from over-work and

over-anxiety. I have known generous lawyers—I could name them—enter with more intensity into the interests of clients than if they were their own."

"A little overdrawn, dear uncle," said Grace.

"Not a particle, Grace—not a particle. No, such men as I allude to would, in their own case, have restrained their eagerness, from the fear of covetousness and selfishness. No, I speak by book. I have known these men to pass sleepless nights and feverish days, while their client's cause hung wavering in the uncertain balance of the law. Think of the exhausting application of the faithful lawyer; think of the candor, the magnanimity, the self-control that may be elicited in the progress of a lawsuit, where an unfair opponent is to be met, and all the chances of sudden defeat at the moment of surest confidence, as in our case—utter shipwreck. No; the captain may cover himself with glory, but his heart goes down with the ship. Is it not so, Mr. Counselor?"

"My short experience in the profession does not warrant my giving an opinion, sir."

"That's modest; so far so good. You, Mr. Esterly, are of course pledged to your cloth; and you, Nelly," he added, and finished the sentence in a whisper, that crimsoned her cheek. He patted her head, and smiled.

"Is not my opinion to be asked?" inquired Grace.

"Your opinion, my child. Excellent, as to the charm of a poem, or the merit of a song; but you are yet in your teens, and we wait till girls come of age before we ask their opinions on grave subjects."

"I think it was *my* opinion, sir, in favor of trusting our cause to our able advocate here, which you graciously accepted, when my sister, Eleanor, my elder and better, rather stood aloof."

Lisle's eyes turned sparkling to Grace, while Mr. Her-

bert said, laughingly, "O, a feather, Grace—a wild-goose's feather, will turn a scale! Eleanor is a reasonable being. You and I are ruled by our instincts."

"I am content, Uncle Walter. Instinct is a divine inspiration—reason only a human ingenuity! But, Uncle Walter," she added, "in your laudation of the legal profession, you have omitted the attribute, which most concerns us ladies. Sir Walter Scott says, 'the best society is that of lawyers.'" Without any purpose, beyond a tilt of her wit with her uncle, Grace had already said enough to charm a young man who, in his narrow social sphere, had never chanced to meet a young woman with rare gifts, set off by high breeding, and the mighty accessories of youth and beauty. Lisle would have detected worldliness or artificialness, by the test of his own simplicity and sincerity; but the seeming contrarieties of Grace Herbert's character, her quick mutations, her deep thoughtfulness, and sudden irradiations, were surprises, and, strange to say, had the fascination of riddles to plain dealers like Lisle.

Lisle was not versed in music. He was ignorant of the terms of the art, and even of the phrases and names on the lips of every frequenter of operas now-a-days; but rarely had Grace been so acceptably flattered as when, sitting down to her piano at her uncle's bidding, and playing an Adagio of Beethoven at his suggestion, she accidentally turned her eye up to Lisle and saw his face glowing, and his eye moistened. This, perhaps, gave an impulse to her genius, for on Mr. Herbert asking her to repeat it, she did it with so much effect that he cried out "Bravo, my child! Now sing me *my* song, 'An old English Gentleman.' When Grace wants to flatter me, Mr. Lisle, she tells me I am the original of that old song, so we agree to call it my song. Go on, Grace."

Grace sang it with expression and charming significance, and, coming to the lines,

"And quaffed a cup of good old wine," etc., etc.,

she turned her face fondly to her Uncle Walter. At the first swell of her voice, Esterly, who was sitting beside Eleanor, sprang to her side and joined her with so much unction, singing, as Archibald thought, so much better than he had ever heard his friend sing before, that the thought arose—and a pang came with it—"it must be Miss Grace he is in love with."

As she faltered at the last stanza of the song, to Lisle's evident vexation, Horace Copley entered. Slightly bowing to the company he approached Grace, and said, "Have you forgotten your engagement, Miss Herbert? Salvi and the *prima donna* are at Mrs. Tallis's, and they have been waiting half an hour for you."

"I had forgotten—utterly. Have you a carriage at the door?"

"Yes; Mrs. Tallis ordered me here."

Grace rang the bell, told the servant to bring her hat and shawl, made a hurried apology to Archibald Lisle, and disappeared, as he thought, like a beautiful vision.

"Confound his impudence!" muttered Walter Herbert, kicking the stool from under his gouty foot.

The curtain had fallen, and Mr. Esterly and Lisle took their leave. The door had scarcely closed on them, when Lisle asked, "Is Copley intimate in this house, Frank?"

"Yes—no, not exactly intimate. He is very well received by Mrs. Herbert, who has a handsome daughter, and likes the éclât of his visits."

'Is Frank so assured, that he is not disturbed by them?' thought Lisle.

"Copley is so repugnant to the old gentleman," continued

Mr. Esterly, "that I think he could scarcely be on intimate footing with his nieces."

"And who," inquired Lisle, "is the Mrs. Tallis, who sent Copley for Miss Herbert?"

"Was it Mrs. Tallis? I did not hear the name."

"You seemed absorbed."

"I was. I am always charmed with Grace Herbert's music; there is soul as well as her delicious voice in it. Why this Mrs. Tallis—is it possible you do not know who she is, Lisle? tell it not to ears polite, my dear fellow—she is the very pretty wife of a very clever and very rich man, Rupert Tallis. She stars it in the fashionable world. She was the beautiful Miss Clayton, and married a few years since to Tallis, contrary to her own inclinations, by her father's decree, as the world says—and the world says further that Horace Copley is her rather too devoted admirer—but that may be mere scandal. She keeps a musical house, and has all the musical people there, the sort of society that Copley affects."

"And is it possible," exclaimed Lisle, "that this is the world that Miss Grace Herbert lives and moves, and has her being in?"

"O Archy—she is young, and what do young women know of the men who are the players in the play of this masked world of ours?"

"But they should know, Frank; and it is the business of you preachers to make them know. It is a sad comment on your profession, that generation after generation goes on, ignorantly plunging into the same vices, the same dangers, and the same destructien."

"Well, good-night, Archy. I'll think of what you say." And at the turn of the street, the friends parted and went their way, both chewing sweet fancies, and neither much troubling himself with social disorders.

CHAPTER V.

"Even a child is known by his doings."

It is always a surprising, but a no less comfortable fact in human life, that no sooner does an event become inevitable, than all the hopes and projects that hung upon its decision are subdued to acquiescence. The mariner goes down calmly in the ship from which there is no deliverance. The criminal accepts the rope he can not avoid, and millions "die with resignation" when death becomes certain; and, to resignation to death in life so frequent, in the indissoluble compact of marriage, the inevitable is the great argument.

The fine castle in the air, which Uncle Walter had built, in the shape of an independent home, in which he might set up housekeeping with his beloved nieces; the wise plans of charity that Eleanor had founded on the contingent fortune, and a tour to Italy, the land of her desires, which Grace had projected with her sister, and Uncle Walter, all vanished with the lost lawsuit, and this most unworldly trio, reverted, with hardly a sigh of regret, to the beaten track of their daily life.

The winter was wearing on; Mr. Esterly was ordained rector over one of the fullest and most fashionable congregations of the city. The gossips who mark every straw that blows athwart the path of a popular unmarried clergyman, did not fail to speculate upon his assiduous visits at Mrs. Herbert's.

"How odd people are!" said Miss Anne Carlton to her mamma. "What do they mean by teazing me about Mr. Esterly. It is too absurd."

"Not exactly *absurd*, my dear." We take the liberty to express Mrs. Herbert's emphasis by italics. In no other mode can her oracular style be rendered. "There would be nothing inconsistent with propriety or probability in Mr. Esterly addressing you."

"Addressing me! O, that's quite *une autre chose*. I flatter myself I have had admirers quite equal in every way to the Rev. Francis Esterly, but the idea of being engaged to him is quite horrid."

"Not *horrid*, Anne!—I wish, my dear child, you would study accuracy of expression—not horrid, but not fitting. A fortune like your's, would be rather an encumbrance to a *clergyman*, though he might *so* use, and dispense it—"

"O, mamma!" cried the reverent young lady, interrupting her mother, "there is no use in your moralizing yourself into a fog about it. Clergymen are just as fond as other men of marrying fortunes, and care just as little as others how, as you say, they use and dispense them. But to return to the Rev. Francis Esterly: I would not marry him if he were to offer himself forty times over. Eleanor and Grace are quite welcome to him. Their fortunes won't encumber him. Do you think he sincerely fancies either of them?"

"I am not *sure*. I make it a rule *never* to be confident. The most sagacious may be at fault as to who will marry who; but this much I will say—if either, Grace."

"O, of course, Grace," replied the young lady, petulantly, "she is always putting herself forward, and Eleanor is so retiring—worth a million of Grace, I could tell them, if they asked my advice. Miss Grace Herbert, with all her outspokenness, keeps her cards to herself, and plays them well, too, while poor Eleanor thinks nothing of the game. It's

my private opinion, mamma, that Grace is just finessing with Esterly, to catch that king of trumps, Copley."

"I wish, Anne, you would not use the phrases of the whist-table, they are *not* graceful 'for so *young* a lady.'"

"Then, in plain phrase, Grace will never accept the reverend, while she has the faintest hope of Horace Copley."

"But she can not have even the *faintest* hope."

"Why, if you please, ma'am?" Now the mother was on the point of saying what the daughter was longing to hear; but both were, in their different modes, wise in their generation, and neither would confess to the other her secret speculations and hopes upon the ulterior possibilities in the case of Horace Copley. The self-believing oracle answered oracularly. "I can't tell you, Anne, *all* the grounds of my opinion. So many circumstances come into the formation of our conclusions, which, after all, *may* be erroneous; you know Copley admires Grace; certainly she is very clever, and she is thought beautiful, though you and I are not of that opinion; and it is impossible to say what a young person of her powers *may* accomplish. But I have known Horace Copley from his childhood, and I think I know him thoroughly. Copley is not altogether an open character. Not so frank as I like, for frankness indicates—hem—hem—many virtues."

"That's right, mamma, club them, I hate items."

"My dear," recommenced Mrs. Herbert, reprovingly, "I was going on to say, that Copley is the sort of man to amuse himself, *now* flirting with Mrs. Tallis, and *now* playing upon Grace's vanity, while he has all the while a serious purpose at heart, that he will cautiously withhold till the right time comes."

"O, fiddle-faddle, mamma! he knows he can have any girl in New York for the asking. What's the use of caution?

No, I'll tell you what it is: he is a pretty gay boy, and means to enjoy his freedom a little longer. I have heard some nice gossip about him, as secret as he is."

"My dear Anne, you should never listen to *such* sort of gossip, nor allude to it. A young lady of *true* delicacy should be ignorant of every thing of the kind, and never imagine the *possibility* of its existence. It's quite time to find out your husband's aberrations *after* you are married."

"Well, mamma, you *are* funny! But do tell me, was there not some talk of a match between Copley and me among you old folks when we were children?"

"Anne, I request you not to use such terms. It's neither polite *nor* respectful. If there is any virtue I do admire, it is reverence."

"Oh, so do all old people! but you know I never mean any thing by what I say, so, please answer my question."

"Well, my dear, there was among us some talk of the kind you allude to, neither serious, nor *quite* jesting. Your dear father's beautiful estate adjoined Elm Grove, and old Mr. Copley had a passion for a great landed property. He had lived in England, and was quite the English gentleman, and your father was quite different; he liked bonds and mortgages, and stocks, and so on; he acquired his fortune by *commerce*, you know."

"No, I do not know. I never knew how papa got his great fortune; what kind of commerce was it?"

"Merchandise, Anne."

"Yes, but what kind?"

"Why, he dealt in the staff of life—*flour*."

"Oh, he was a flour merchant, then?"

Mrs. Carlton nodded assent, but she forbore telling her daughter that his fortune was made and moulded in a baker's shop.

"My child," resumed Mrs. Herbert, "*our* country is progressive. One should not look to antecedents; the chances are, that more than half our fashionable people would run their heads against mechanics or tradespeople, or something of that *very* disagreeable sort. We have our snobs—a species of vulgarity and humbug, out of place, and quite ridiculous in our democratic republic."

"But, mamma," said the young lady, after a thoughtful pause, "our antecedents, as you call them, were gentry, were they not?"

"Ye—yes. You *surely* know, Anne, that I was distantly related, through my mother, to my husband's family." Mrs. Herbert sunk her *antecedent* father, who began a peddler, and ended a millionare.

"It is provoking," said Anne, "that our gentle blood should come through the Herbert channel. There's not one of them I desire to be related to—I except Eleanor. Well," she continued, rising, and trying before a glass some flowers she had been rearranging for her hair, "we shall see how it will end. The plot thickens. Here is this wonderful young lawyer coming to see old Mr. Herbert. Hum! he sees no one, heeds no one, but Grace. Would you let them droop on the right side, mamma? So—is not that effect charming? The dress of the head '*exige beaucoup de génie*,' as Madame says. I should like to solve the mystery of Grace's attractions. She has height; but Madame Lakay says her figure is not comparable to mine—nor is her complexion to Eleanor's—nor is she in any thing to Eleanor."

It may well be asked, why such a thing as Anne Carlton should be able to do a kind of justice to Eleanor? In the first place, she had no rivalry with her. But better than that, the sweetness of Eleanor's temper, her Christianly wisdom and simplicity, surrounded her with an atmosphere

that exorcised the bad and elicited the good. In Scripture phrase, "she overcame evil with good."

Mrs. Herbert resumed: "If you were acquainted with science, Anne, you would know the positive demands the negative. Copley appreciates the advantage of fortune and position—Grace disdains them. He is secretive—she disdains secresy."

"Yes, indeed; she is as proud as if she were an empress."

"O, no, my dear, not exactly proud. You should analyze—you should study human nature."

"I never shall. It is the dullest study in human life; those that study it most make the greatest blunders, in my judgment. I would like to know if any analysis of human nature would tell me why Horace Copley did not dance with Grace last evening, but once with me, and ever so many times with Mrs. Tallis."

"With whom *did* Grace dance, Anne?"

"She did not dance. She was talking the first half of the evening with the reverend, and the last half with the lawyer."

"You don't say Mr. Esterly was *there?*"

"He was. Why should he not be? I am sure neither you nor he think there is any harm in dancing."

"Certainly not; but a clergyman should *not* shock public opinion."

"O, I rather think Mr. Esterly cares more for his own conscience than for public opinion," said Anne, for once, in her contrarieties to her mother, hitting a sound truth. "But perhaps," she added, "he bowed his head to that Dagon, public opinion, for he went home early, and left the field to Lisle, who, I'll answer for it, does not know a polka from a redowa."

"*Did* Mr. Copley lead Mrs. Tallis out to supper?" asked Mrs. Herbert, with the air of one who is making out the points in a case.

"No—but he *did* lead me out to supper. And now what do you say?"

"That's well; but I can't quite interpret him. One must see with one's own eyes. Perhaps he wished to pique Grace. He may have intended to make capital with you, for I am sorry to say, Anne, you seem to prefer the ultra-fashionable young men, who flirt with married ladies. Or, after all, he may think that Grace is on the brink of an engagement with Esterly, and so thrown out."

"Oh, mamma, that is as satisfactory as if you had 'seen with your own eyes.' Would it not be delightful to have Grace married? Such a dull marriage, too! Three girls are two too many for one house."

"My dear, you know it's my pride that you all live in harmony."

"Yes, but the music would be better if there were but one instrument. Poor Eleanor, she is a dear; but I always thought it would be her fate to be an old maid!"

CHAPTER VI.

"What's to say,
May be said briefly: She has never known
A mother's care."

Mrs. Herbert's family were punctual church-goers, and none of them wandered from their own fold excepting Grace. She sometimes strayed away to hear an eloquent preacher, or fine music, to her more eloquent; or to lend her imagination to the ritual of the elder church. Of late, she was invariably in her own place in Mr. Herbert's pew, seated between Eleanor and her Uncle Walter. Poor Grace had such strong magnetic repulsions as well as attractions, that it overset her devotions to sit next Mrs. Herbert or Miss Carlton.

Mrs. Herbert observed that Grace's eye was fixed on the rector, and that even he could see the tears that stole from that beautiful eye over her glowing cheek. Mrs. Herbert rejoiced in salient facts in her study of human nature. "No man resists this sort of flattery," she thought, and she saw the field clearing for her daughter. Eleanor's quiet demeanor was in no way changed. She sat with her head inclined downward, in a listening and meditative posture.

The family had returned one Sunday evening from a charity sermon, which had made all the women in the church cry, and most of the men give. Grace's mercury was up to that fervid point, which is an ordinary temperature

with enthusiastic young women of eighteen. She had a remarkably retentive memory and imitative powers. She repeated long passages from the sermon with Mr. Esterly's intonation and manner. Eleanor listened for a while, with a pensive smile, then bidding her good-night, she went to her room.

"Oh! Uncle Walter," exclaimed Grace, "how I wish Eleanor had a little more enthusiasm!"

"Eleanor's enthusiasm," replied Mr. Herbert, "turns the mill, while yours, Grace, plays the fountain. She was out doors yesterday, the mercury at zero, from ten A.M. to five P.M., in behalf of this charity for which your paragon was so eloquent, and you are so excited."

"But do you not think, brother," interposed his sister-in-law, "that different persons have different demonstrations? For instance—"

"Oh never mind the instance, ma'am," cried Grace. "Why do you call Mr. Esterly *my* paragon, Uncle Walter? I am sure all his people are raving about him."

"Yes, doing all they can, as they do for every clever young clergyman, to spoil him. I grant you, young and old rant about him—all—excepting Eleanor." Mr. Herbert made the exception slowly and emphatically.

The sisters occupied one apartment, and slept in the same bed. Grace was nettled by Mr. Herbert's implied rebuke. She could better bear the whole world's disapprobation than her Uncle Walter's. She soon followed her sister. She found Eleanor sitting under the gas-light, reading the Bible. She did not directly address her, but, walking up and down the room, continued her citations from the sermon, till, craving sympathy, she appealed to her sister. "Now, Eleanor, was not that exquisite?—Now hear this, Eleanor?—do you remember this?" Finally, annoyed at her sister's faint

assents, she exclaimed, "Do for once, Eleanor, shut up your Bible, and listen to me. What is the use of this duty—reading? Is that a tear?" A tear was glistening on the Bible's leaf. "Uncle Walter was quite right—you and I have different modes of manifesting our sensibilities. But now, dear saint, do listen to me. Do you believe that Mr. Esterly has the least notion how much he is admired?"

"He should have, Grace. There is a perfect sirocco of flattery blowing upon him from every quarter."

"And you have taken a moral alarm. You are afraid these bad airs will cloud his fair soul? I have more faith in him. I believe that soul is surrounded by a disinfecting atmosphere of its own."

"Ah, Grace! 'Lead us not into temptation.'"

"Yes, I know. But, Eleanor, do you think that Mr. Esterly suspects how much I admire his eloquence?"

"He should—if he sees your face in church, he may read your admiration."

"Perhaps, Eleanor, you fancy I hold up my face to show it to him?"

Eleanor protested she thought no such thing.

"On my word, I do not," continued Grace, vehemently. "It is involuntary. I can not droop my head as you do, so like the Naples Psyche—why look hurt, Eleanor? I do not mean in imitation of that divine heathen, but truly you do look like her, as if you were revolving all serious things in heaven and earth. I asked our rector the other day if he did not perceive a certain resemblance to that most spiritual of all human forms."

"Grace!"

"Don't be alarmed. He was not at all struck by my sisterly conceit."

"What reply did he make?"

"Ah, you can be curious, sweet saint! Why, he turned

off to the window, and said—I can't recall quite what he did say—I know he confessed the resemblance; but let that pass. Now, mine Eleanor—I am going to open my heart to you!"

"Not now, not now, Grace," said her sister hurriedly, "it's past eleven; we must go to bed."

"If the house were on fire, I believe you would go to bed at eleven, Eleanor," replied Grace, impatiently.

Both sisters proceeded to their disrobing, but when Eleanor laid her head on her pillow, Grace sat down on the bed-side, her dark tresses streaming over her night-dress, and her eyes lighted with the excited and brilliant color of her cheek, and said eagerly, "Eleanor," and then bending her head, she kissed her sister's cold cheek, and added in a lower tone of her sweet, rich voice, "Eleanor, my counselor and guide, you must hear me now!"

"Speak on, Grace," replied Eleanor, turning her head away from her sister.

"Yes, I will speak, and you must listen, Eleanor."

"I hear every syllable," replied her sister, in a tremulous voice.

"If I have hurt your feelings, forgive me, Eleanor, but you know when one's wide awake with one's feelings, one can't understand how one's sister can be sleepy though it be past eleven. I want you to make the soundings of my heart. You shall explore its depths and shallows—take the plummet and line of your better experience, better wisdom, better every thing, and be my pilot. Now then—you know that I admire our rector beyond all bounds."

"And so love him, Grace?" asked Eleanor, in an earnest voice.

"No, not in that wise—nor—Eleanor, I am bound to the whole truth to you, for 'perfection bears with imperfection'—do I love him so much but that I am pleased with Horace

Copley's attentions—eager for them—delighted when he dances with me instead of with Anne."

"My dear sister! how can that be?"

"It is even so. I knew you would be shocked, and still more shocked when I confess that I would give a great deal to know how much Copley cares for me."

"Then surely you do not love Mr. Esterly?"

"But I like him excessively. One would be so sure of going on to like him more and more, till liking ripened to loving, Eleanor; and since reading Aunt Sarah's letters, I dread the uncertainties of married life, and feel like running for any safe harbor. A fate has pursued all of our name—no, certainly, I do not love the rector as I expected to love."

She paused, rose from the bed, stood for a moment meditating, and then said:

"I will finish, though I fall to zero in your opinion. I have sometimes thought of late, that if—I am ashamed of my meanness—if Archibald Lisle were less reserved, and more a man of the world, more polished—what strange creatures we are—it would be easier to love him than the rector;—he is intrinsically a gentleman, and might come round. At times he has a charming self-forgetfulness; his eye is so bewitching, it laughs, it speaks, and in spite of his shrinking bashful sensitiveness, I have seen him look regally down on Copley."

"My dear sister, you do not love Mr. Esterly?"

"No; I see I do not; but on the whole I prefer him, and if it were not that the life of a clergyman's wife is so dull, that I should have to give up the theater and—Oh, Eleanor! the opera, and take part in Sunday-schools, and sewing circles, and hear of vestry-meetings, and all that sort of thing—I do think the rector is so good, and charming, so rich in gifts for this world and graces for heaven, that I should not dare refuse him."

"Has he asked you, Grace?" said Eleanor, faintly.

"Asked me? no; not in so many words; but how strange of you, Eleanor, as if the thing were questionable. Is he not here every day or evening? does he not sit by me, and listen to my playing for hours? Why, three evenings last week, when you were out late on that Orphan Asylum business, he was still here when you came home. We had read half Petrarch. Wherever I go, I am teazed about him. I am sure Copley is jealous of him. Every one sees but you, Eleanor."

"I shall be no longer blind, Grace. Come to bed, my dear child."

"No, I will not, till you have given me your counsel—your opinion at least."

"Then," Eleanor replied, in a faltering voice, "my opinion is, that your feelings, when quickened by his, will force a decision in his favor. Good-night—God direct you."

"Good-night, dear Eleanor," said Grace, bending over her sister to kiss her. "Tears on your cheek, Eleanor! you frighten me; you are so dreadfully solemn about this matter."

Another month passed away. It is to be hoped that the rector was as faithful to his clerical duties as to his lay devotions at the Herbert's. Grace suffered herself to flow on with the current, secure, with Eleanor's authority, in awaiting the decision of her feelings when the time came.

"I wish," she said to her sister, "that the rector were more lover-like. If he were, I believe the current of my being would set to him. This morning—you know, Eleanor, I tell you every thing, and turn my heart inside out to you—this morning, as I was coming into the door, I dropped my bracelet; as I turned for it, he was pressing it to his

lips. To be sure this was a common gallantry, but very uncommon with him. Now, Horace Copley, if I drop my handkerchief, kisses it before returning it; or if a leaf, he puts it in his bosom, and his bosom has its windows shut, and blinds closed. Oh, Eleanor, you think me foolish and vain—I am! I am!"

"Which of your bracelets was it, Grace?"

"What signifies that? Why, it was the one you gave me at Christmas, not the coral one, but that with your hair; you remember how he admired the pearl setting!"

It was soon after this that the Herbert family awakened to the fact that Eleanor was becoming thin, and pale, and nervous, not irritable, but discomposed by trifles, and tearful when no one could guess the cause. Mrs. Herbert prescribed and administered her favorite remedy, camomile, but even that panacea failed. She urged change of air, but Uncle Walter, to whom she appealed to second her, did not seem at all alarmed by the "perturbations" in this serene planet. However, a providential invitation—so styled by Mrs. Herbert—came from Cuba to Eleanor, and she, with a sudden decision that surprised her family, and alarmed her sister, resolved to sail in the steamer on the following Monday.

"Why did not you tell me, Mrs. Herbert?" said Grace, impetuously, "that you thought my sister so ill? Why did I not see it myself?"

"My dear," replied Mrs. Herbert in her calmest manner, "you were pre-occupied. Young ladies," she added, with a smile, "are often *one-idead!*"

Nothing in the world provoked Grace so much as her step-mother's cold truisms. A biting reply rose to her lips, but it was repressed by the conviction that she deserved the pain Mrs. Herbert inflicted. Her eyes filled with tears—"I shall go to Cuba with my sister," she said, in a much soft-

ened voice. This was an unexpected move, and it threw Mrs. Herbert's whole game into confusion.

"My dear Grace!" she exclaimed, "you are too much alarmed. There is no danger in Eleanor's case. The constitution, as medical *men* say, is not consolidated before five-and-twenty; 'fluctuations *are* continually occurring.'"

"Nonsense, Mrs. Herbert! I beg your pardon, ma'am, but Eleanor is not one of those flimsy things that rise and fall with the barometer. She is a dear, sound, little woman —body and mind. She is seriously ill—I shall go."

"Allow me to say, Grace, you are too apt to obey your impulses. At this moment you think only of Eleanor—to-morrow you will remember another, and may—*too late*, regret having gone away at a crisis in your life. At least," she added, sure into which scale Eleanor would throw her influence, "consult your sister."

Grace paused for a moment, struck with the fact that the rector weighed lightly in the balance against her sister, and then said, "Consult my sister! to what purpose? She would never consent to my making a possible sacrifice for her. No, Mrs. Herbert—I shall go!"

"What a headstrong girl!" thought Mrs. Herbert, as Grace left her. "Just on the brink of this engagement—it would have been such a relief! Well, I am more and *more* convinced that there *is* uncertainty in *this* transitory world!"

Eleanor Herbert did the work of charity, not as a servant, working for hire, but as a child, serving with filial love. She instructed the ignorant without esteeming it an act of piety any more than she would have called the conducting of a friend's child through the perils of a crowded street, an act of friendship. "She gave with simplicity" knowledge, time, affection—all she had to give. She was very unlike those fashion-

able ladies, who throw idle dissipations and all manner of frivolities into one scale, and church-going, and charity subscriptions, and Sunday-school keeping into the other, and fancy they have fairly adjusted the scales between God and Mammon. Eleanor was in this world, but not of it.

Sunday intervened, and found Eleanor at her post at her Sunday-school. Weak as she was, she went through the usual routine of instruction to the little commoners she had gathered from the obscure lanes and dens of the city. When her task was done, and she told them she was to be absent from them; they eagerly gathered round her and received each a rebuke, an admonition, or a commendation, and all a word of tender interest. The sweet accents of Eleanor's gentle voice, the grace and refinement of her manner were not lost upon those poor little outcasts and outlaws. Accustomed to harsh tones, and bred amid every species of vulgarity, a presence like hers, has to them, in addition to its intrinsic power, the charm of surprise and novelty; the spiritual beauty is visible and tangible. While her little Celts were demonstrating the quality of their vehement spirits, the rector, in passing to his duty in the school, paused behind her. One tall stout girl dropped on her knees, as if she were in adoration before the Virgin-mother, and literally kissed the hem of Eleanor's garment. Half a dozen pressed their lips to her pale hands, and one, the least of all, and with not the cleanest of faces, sidled up to her and said fondly: "It's your own lips, teacher, I'm after wanting to feel!" Eleanor kissed her on both cheeks, while her mates laughed, wondering at her audacity,—the rector, smiling, passed on.

When the school was dismissed, he joined her in the vestibule, and asked leave to attend her, in the carriage, to her home. "How charmingly your little vagrants have got on," he said. "I saw your leave-taking. With such fur-

naces as their hearts are, and at this plastic period of their lives, what may not such teachers as you are, Eleanor, do for them—but did I hear you aright? are you going away?"

"Yes."

"And so suddenly! But not for long, Eleanor?"

"For some months."

"Months!" There was a real tragedy in his tone. He had never before, in all their intimacy, called her "Eleanor." "What takes you away so suddenly?"

"A pressing invitation," she replied. She was fluttered by his manner, and, averting her head, she added, "and I am not well."

"But surely," he rejoined, "not ill enough to require a voyage—an absence of months! Have you taken medical advice?" Eleanor shook her head. "You will not go alone! Your sister must go with you?"

"My sister!" exclaimed Eleanor, and involuntarily raised her eyes to his. There was a revelation in his which she thus interpreted: What a struggle that kind suggestion cost him! "No," she replied, "Grace can not leave New York now—I must go alone." Both parties were silent for the short distance to Mrs. Herbert's door. When they were in the drawing-room, Eleanor sank down, really unable to stand, on the cushioned chair Mr. Esterly drew to the fire for her. He pressed her cold, almost lifeless hand to his lips. That moment when a man, really in love, is about to make his confession, and stake all upon it, is the humblest, the most self-distrusting of his life. And besides the timidity natural to this crisis, Esterly had not the ordinary self-complacency that is mail of proof to most men. "I have no right to interfere with your arrangements, Eleanor," he said, his voice faltering. "If I dared to hope you had any feeling answering to mine—if my love for you—"

Eleanor started, and looked up with surprise and enquiry. "Love!" she repeated, in a tone of astonishment, "for me?"

"Yes, dearest Eleanor, the profoundest, tenderest love."

Eleanor sunk back, and covered her face with her handkerchief, while she suffered Esterly to retain her hand, and he felt (and the consciousness thrilled his whole being) the delicate pressure that returned the grasp of his. He told her, in a few fervid sentences, the "history and mystery" of his love—how it came, and how it grew, and how it had of late been repressed and abated of hope by her growing reserve, and how he had thought it possible that through her frank sister he might win her. Suddenly he felt Eleanor's hand become nerveless, he heard a low sigh, her handkerchief dropped, and he saw that she was colorless as marble, and as senseless. He rang the bell, and so violently that Mrs. Herbert, Grace, Anne Carlton, the servants, rushed in at once, and Walter Herbert, just coming through the hall-door, was there too. "She is dead!" shrieked Grace. Uncle Walter laid her on a sofa. Esterly dropped on his knees beside her, and laid his hand on her heart. "She is *not* dead!" he said, in a voice choked with emotion. Water, eau de cologne, hartshorn, all the restoratives at hand, were produced. Grace, half frantic between sudden terror and sudden joy, was dashing all on at once. Mrs. Herbert, always imperturbable, brought order out of confusion, but it was a long time (to Grace it seemed an eternity) before the hue of life returned to Eleanor's cheek. When it did, Esterly, who had never once turned his eyes from her, uttered a fervent "Thank God!"

Uncle Walter had read the riddle aright. "Come away, Esterly," he said, "you and I are not wanted here—at present."

"It does not answer," said Mrs. Herbert, "for any one to

undertake more than they can do." If Mrs. Herbert were exploded from the crater of a volcano, as Grace once said of her, her first utterance would have been a flat truism. "Now, my dear Eleanor," she continued, "I trust you will not take up those vagrants again, when you come back from Cuba. I am sure no one has more feeling for the poor than I have; but really such work should be left to people of strong nerves, which neither you nor I possess."

"So I think, mamma," said Miss Anne; "to people that are used to it. Dear me, Eleanor, how frightened I was! Do you know I thought Mr. Esterly had been sent for, because you were dying. Oh, Grace, did not I look pale?"

Grace, without listening to Miss Anne's silly egotisms, was supporting Eleanor to their own apartment. There, Eleanor felt something like self-reproach while she was receiving Grace's tender ministrations.

Grace, entirely unsuspecting, was exclaiming at due intervals, "I am glad Frank Esterly sees now how ill you are. I suppose you broke down at church, and that was why he came home with you. I shall never work for him as you have done! If he had one spark of discernment, he would prefer you to me—he does not comprehend you—how should he, you are so reserved lately? You used not to be so, Eleanor. How glad I am that you are going to Cuba! and I will tell you now, that you are so much better, I am going with you! Don't make *des grands yeux* at me," she continued, as she saw her sister's flush of gratitude and love; "it is all arranged, Eleanor!"

Eleanor drew her sister down, and kissed her. "Grace," she said, "I have something far more generous to ask of you, than going to Cuba with me; but leave me now, for a while, till I am rested, and can summon resolution to tell you what it is." When Eleanor was left to herself, a strong current of happiness set out from her heart, and swept away all the

disquietudes that had perturbed that serene region. When, after a refreshing sleep, she awoke, Grace was sitting on her bed-side, fondly watching her. "Grace," she said, looking up with a very serious smile, "I hardly know whether my waking thoughts are dreams, or my dreams realities. I am very happy, but I am sure I could not be so, if I thought I had done you a wrong, or crossed you in any way." She paused. Grace gazed, as if a faint light were dawning. "I was myself deceived," continued Eleanor, "surprised more than I can tell you, when, this morning—"

"'Deceived!' 'surprised!'" exclaimed Grace, springing away from her sister; "I see—I see it all," she said, rushing up and down the room, while the clouds of frail humanity shadowed her fine face. But the sun broke through, and throwing her arms around her sister, half laughing, and half crying, she said, "it is all right and fitting, Eleanor. We have had a pretty game of blind-fold between us. Your eyes bandaged with your modesty, mine with my vanity. Oh, what a fool! what a giddy, presumptuous fool I have been! How patient you were with me! How could I imagine that Frank Esterly was my lover, when you were made for him, and his parish, Eleanor? Now, I see plainly that he always treated me as a brother should treat a dear sister. I thank him for that. Well, my silly vanity is punished, but my woman's pride is safe. I never *loved* him—you know that."

"Yes, and that conviction has given me inexpressible comfort this evening, Grace."

"*Comfort!* what a word to use at this culminating point of your life. Sisters *are* different, as our sententious stepmother would remark." After a moment's consideration, she added, "I understand it all now. It was sisterly love I was trying to fuse into something more fervent. Truly, Eleanor, I like the brother better than the lover."

"Rest there, Grace, in that blessed conclusion, and listen to me for a moment. I must seem to you, and to others not quite as kind observers as you are, a love-sick girl. But it was not a hopeless affection for Frank Esterly that wore me away to this pale shadow of myself, but my contrition for my insensibility to the blessings of my life, for my repining, because one was denied me—for my jealousy of my dear sweet sister—for the jealousy and envy that corroded and ate away every good purpose, and holy resolution. I combated, but grew weaker, and not stronger, from day to day. The only extenuation I could find for myself was in the conviction, that you did not love Frank Esterly, and were rushing into a difficult service to which you had no call."

"I was, Eleanor; you were right, as you are right in every thing, but your conscientious self-tormenting, and that, I suppose, only makes you the truer saint. Now, let me go and tell dear Uncle Walter."

Eleanor assenting, Grace went, but to her extreme disappointment, he expressed no surprise, but merely bowed his head with a pleased and provoking affirmation "I know—I know."

"But you did not know, Uncle Walter, you did not suspect?"

"Suspect! No, child, I was sure Eleanor was predestined to this holy calling. Frank Esterly saw on her serene brow the Turkish sentence of Fate, '*It is written*,' and he accepted his destiny. He is a wise and happy man—Frank. He has built his house upon a rock, and now, if the floods come, and the rain descends, and the winds blow, the house will not fall—it is founded on a rock."

"Yes, for the rock of Gibraltar is not more stable than our little Eleanor. But, uncle, do you know that all this while that Frank Esterly has been haunting our house, I never

dreamed of this, and—never tell, Uncle Walter—I even fancied, vain goose that I was, that he was in love with me."

"I knew that, too, my child."

"Uncle Walter!—and did not tell me—let me blindly run my head against a post."

"I knew there would be no head or heart-breaking—you would dodge the post. You are destined to many a hair-breadth 'scape, Grace, but our mistakes and follies are our best teachers, our 'sternest, and our best,' if we early enough take the lesson, and lay it to heart—experience can scarcely be called a 'stern-light' to a girl just eighteen." Walter Herbert sighed deeply, and his face took one of those expressions of sad memories, that often alternated with its benign playfulness. Grace's thoughts reverted to the intimations of his life in the green morocco trunk. Both were silent.

CHAPTER VII.

"He little knew
The power of magic was no fable."

The closest friendship of Lisle's youth was with Arthur Clifford, his classmate. This young man died in the midst of his college career, leaving to his cotemporary students a memory to be loved and honored to the end of their lives; and leaving his mother's friendship to Archibald, a richer legacy than much fine gold. The subjoined extracts are from a letter to this lady, written, as it appears, soon after Eleanor's marriage.

"Miss Alice requests me, you say, to describe my friend Esterly's wedding. Alas! I have no story to tell; business intervened, and took me out of town, and thus saved all parties from my blundering performance of the office of bridegroom."

"Love and Reason, antagonisms in the common courts of love, have shaken hands over this union of my friends. God *hath* joined them together, and whatever be the friction of life, their bonds will grow stronger."

"Once for all, my dear friend, I entreat you to dismiss certain 'pleasant fancies,' as you truly call them. Love and Reason can have no conjunction there. That 'bright particular star' does not shine for me, a country-bred lad, out of sorts with the uses of the fine world. Your feminine allusion

to Endymion and the moon will not do. That myth is no type for this prosaic day of ours. The radiant flood of feminine majesty falls only on high places. I seldom see Miss H., and have no reason to believe that she remembers my existence, in the intervals of our meeting."

"You ask me about my business concerns: they are prospering. My senior partner's malady proving of an incurable nature, he has manfully retired at once, and so commended me to his clients, that I retain a considerable proportion of the business of the office. This, as my good father would say, is *providential.* My young brothers need my aid; were I alone concerned I could await patiently the sure results of industry in my profession. As it is, I take the accidents of fortune greedily and gratefully. Should you find them tempting me out of my modesty, or my simple habits, save me, dear friend, by your timely warning. With my love and a kiss to dear little Alice—yours faithfully,

"A. L."

"P.S. Don't, Miss Alice, turn on me the disdainful shoulder of a Miss in her teens. The Alice of my memory is a Hebe girl of ten, with lips bright and sweet as an opening carnation, frankly upturned to meet mine."

A keen-scented reader will perceive that Archibald Lisle did not tell the whole truth to his friend. He coolly said what he believed the "intervals of their meeting were to Miss Herbert." He did not even hint at what they were to him.

His life had been too full of earnest work for those fancies that flit over the youth of most men, as ephemeral as the insect life of a summer's day. Lisle, like other men, had his ideal—ideals vary! But he was not like other men, who, being as foolish, if not as mad as Don Quixote, shape the actual to the ideal, and, while Puck's unction lasts, are happy

in the illusion. Lisle's ideal was verified in the beauty (an element in all young men's ideals) the bright intelligence, the loftiness, the unworldliness, and the fearless sincerity of Grace. Still it had but faintly shadowed the indefinable charm that spell-bound him. Her image haunted him, filled his world, banishing even himself from it. It followed him to the thoroughfares of business, so that often briefs, depositions, and all documents under the "lawyer's barbarous pen," were dim to his incorporate sense. If he read an exciting poem, if he saw a picture that charmed him, his first thought was, "what would she think of it?" In short, her vitality was infused into whatever "touched his soul to finest issues." Beware, Archibald Lisle! Rebuke hope as you will! heap on the ashes of your reserve as you may, the fire covered and hidden, is becoming more intense, the danger more imminent!

Most women are the first to detect the love they inspire. Grace did not in this case. Perhaps her perceptions were dulled by the confident and self-complacent demonstration of most of her admirers, or were restrained by the rebuke to her vanity in her sister's affair. She might have been misled by her Uncle Walter's frequent reiterations that he could not get Lisle to the house. "The scamp knows I love him," he said, "and Mrs. Herbert, at my request, has been civil to him, but he will not come to us. Why the deuce, Grace, don't you beam on him, for my sake?"

"I have done my best, Uncle Walter, both for your sake and my own; for a clever man is a rare bird in our precincts. Did I not heartily concur in Frank's wish that Mr. Lisle should be his groomsman, and he consented; and we rehearsed the performance of our joint office; and on the very morning of the wedding came a note, saying that business compelled him to leave town—cool, I thought!"

Much involuntary injustice is done in this world, in small

as well as great matters. The "business" to which there was a mere allusion in Lisle's letter to Mrs. Clifford was a most inopportune journey to a distant part of New England, where Mrs. Clifford's only son was placed at an academy. He had written to Lisle—"For heaven's sake, dear Archy, come here without delay; I am in trouble—nothing but a boy's scrape, as you will see, but if dear mother knows it, she will think it as bad as murder. You can set all right with the master in half an hour, and she need never break her heart over it."

Lisle's interposition availed, and it was characteristic of him to say nothing of it to Mrs. Clifford, and not to hint at what cost of sweet expectations he had sacrificed his proximity to Grace, at her sister's wedding.

Archibald Lisle was reserved, perhaps to a fault. Certainly he was in strong contrast to our self-complacent young ladies and gentlemen who pour out their personalities to every willing and unwilling ear; emulating in their narrow orbit the spontaneous confidence of certain popular writers, who make a "clean breast" of it to the reading public, and write down and *print* every emotion and every throb of passion as unreservedly as if talking to their bosom-friend, and as coolly as they would register the rise and fall of the mercury.

The accidents of life had confirmed the reserve which was in the very fibre of Lisle's character. The mother is the natural confident of the child. His died in his early youth, and though her love for him was immeasurable, she was, like our New England women who are not softened and developed by society, undemonstrative; and his father, a plain, sensible working man, had little beyond his probity and kind-heartedness, that answered to his son's gifted nature. He married again, promptly, after the death of Archibald's mother; a second brood followed, but were not permitted to interfere

with his "first companion's" dying injunction, that her son should be educated (sent to college) cost what it might. Mistress Lisle had never propounded the rights or wrongs of women—perhaps she had never heard of them—but living or dead her behests were obeyed by her meek husband, who devoted his spare gains to *advantages*—that all-comprehending Yankee term—for her son. His pursuits and associations raised him above the home sphere, and threw him into conscious isolation. He was too generous to seek the society that would widen the distance between him and his father's intimates, the mechanics and farmers of a rural district. We are all free and equal—all republicans—all democrats. There are no recognized gradations of rank; but they are felt and measured with microscopic accuracy. Where are they unknown, except, as Sir Walter said, among the Hottentots?

The cravings for intimacy and affection are not dulled, but made more intense by a reserved nature. Archibald's were appeased by Arthur Clifford's friendship. He was deprived of this by his friend's early death, and he came to our great city to struggle alone, without fellowship or sympathy. "Every Englishman is an island," says Emerson. Lisle was a fortified island; but the hour and the woman came, and before the magic of a correspondent nature, the tide swept in and swept out; still the barriers that nature had set, and habit maintained, stood, and not a human being knew he loved Grace Herbert—not Mrs. Clifford, his most confidential correspondent—not Uncle Walter, who, in his own genial nature had an open "sessame" to every other chamber of Archibald's heart. No one suspected it—except one poor little obscure girl! A loving woman has a subtlety of perception almost preternatural.

Life went on. Lisle's summer, with the exception of a short visit to his father, was spent in heated court-rooms and

in his office in Wall-street. His sphere scarcely touched Grace Herbert's, but from that illuminated world he had some flashes of intelligence through Walter Herbert, whose frequent pleasure it was to drop in upon his younger friend. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and he seldom came and went without some mention of Grace.

"Grace," he said, "has taken to studying the old English poets. I studied them, too, when I was a college-lad, and loved them, and love them yet better than our befogged, transcendental cotemporaries; it needs a nautical eye to see your way through them. We always love best what we read in our youth. You never heard Grace read, Lisle? The poets might turn out of heaven to hear her read their verses. Her voice is the most delicious sound I ever heard. Ah, Lisle, I come to you for comfort. Our house is desolate. My child has gone off to Saratoga, with Mrs. Herbert and her daughter—my good and my evil spirits gone together! The girls are making what the gentry there call 'a sensation.' Anne is in her right niche, 'made to order' for a watering place; but poor Grace frets in the harness. Her rich Philadelphia suitor has followed her there. He'll not take 'No,' thrice said, for an answer."

The summer passed, and autumn came.

"There's a rare young Englishman in town," said Uncle Walter; "modest, not shy."

"The Honorable Melbourne Grey?"

"The same. Do you know him?"

"Yes, I met him at our club, and had the pleasure of showing him our courts."

"Ah! I see him in another sort of court. A secret, Archy—you are my safety-valve. I think he is on his knees to Grace. I trust in heaven she'll let him stay there. I can't lose my child; and, though he's a fine fellow, with fam-

ily and fortune, and all that, and all that, yet I don't fancy Grace going where she would be received upon sufferance—looked down upon as an American, and have to follow into dinner at the tail of trumpery Lady This and Lady That. No, my Grace is a queen in her own right." This time Mr. Herbert left poor Lisle with a bitter cud to chew.

But in a few days more he came into the inner office with his sunniest aspect. "The Honorable Grey has gone," he said, "'with a flea in his ear.' I don't quite see into Grace—women are tickle tackle. I am afraid there are breakers ahead. I hate the sight of Horace Copley!"

Months followed, marked by a few incidents, soon forgotten by Grace, but making epochs in Lisle's life. He had been taking a sporting stroll on Long Island, and brought home with him the sweetest things of our spring woodlands, the creeping arbutus, early violets, and anemones. He sent them to Miss Herbert, and calling to see her the next evening, she naturally adverted to his "lovely spring flowers." He asked her if she had observed among the blue violets a few white ones, of a species new to him, and fragrant. She had not, and ringing the bell, directed John to bring down a bouquet from her library-table. John returned with a bouquet of exotics, marketable flowers! "O! not that, John," exclaimed Grace; "I told you my library-table."

"Why, so you did, Miss Grace; but I kind of did not realize, and thought it was the bouquet Mr. Copley sent on Thursday, and was carried up to your own room."

He left Grace blushing at certain natural inferences from his excuse, and returned with poor Archy's flowers, drooping and hanging their pretty heads, it would seem in silent sympathy with his sinking heart.

"Oh! Mr. Lisle," exclaimed Grace, "I am ashamed! I forgot to put water in the vase. You may carry them away, John—we can't tell the white violets from the blue."

"Copley's flowers were sent on Thursday," thought Lisle, "and are as fresh now as then; mine, plucked yesterday, are dead!"

Sterile months passed away, and one happy evening came. Lisle passed it alone with Grace and her uncle. It lighted up weeks of life for him. "Uncle Walter" was supremely happy—Grace electrifying. There was not a disagreement, a discordant note. The last new books were spoken of—Tennyson's last poem. Lisle made a remark upon it that particularly struck and pleased Grace. She repeatedly adverted to it in the course of the evening. Not two months after, in a society where they met, Grace said, quoting his remark, "Somebody, I can't recall who, said so-and-so to me."

Lisle had not forgotten a word she uttered that evening, nor a shade of her expression.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The eyes smiled, too;
But 'twas as if remembering they had wept,
And knowing they should some day weep again."

In the attic room of a crowded tenement, in an obscure but decent quarter of our great city, sat a middle-aged man, working at the jeweler's trade, ill provided with the means and appliances of his craft, but working ingeniously, and by fits, with almost supernatural rapidity and effect. One seeing him in these, his best hours, would have taken him for a patient and hopeful craftsman; but suddenly he would stop his work, throw back his head, make wild gestures, and turn his eyes, brighter than any gem he wrought, upon a young girl who sat on a low chair beside him, performing tasks he assigned her—now sorting precious stones, and then rubbing them by the hour, as if the pressure of her delicate fingers could polish their hard surfaces. She asked no questions—he had long ago put an end to all hope of relief from that childish instinct—but day after day, weary month after weary month, she did his wayward bidding with a gentle assiduity that sprang from a femininely submissive nature. The child, for child she still seemed, though in her sixteenth year, was most of all bewildered by her father's fits of fondness, when he would snatch her to his bosom and pour showers of tears over her, and then sink for hours into a state of death-like apathy.

She had but a feeble comprehension of the singularity of her fate. She had been five years shut up in this attic with her monomaniac father, never leaving it excepting for á dismal walk in the twilight with him, covered with a double veil, and running to keep up with his long and hasty strides. No doubt the pair sometimes excited curiosity, even amid the egotistic crowd of our thronged city; but the natural conclusion was, that the child so cautiously veiled, so seemingly dragged along, was either blind or defaced. Blind! defaced! Never were eyes more perfect than Jessie Manning's; perfect in their lustrous violet blue, long dark lashes, and all perfecting accessories. Her features were symmetrical, and of the most femininely delicate order of beauty. Her complexion gave no indication of the happy robustness of her English nativity; but it had the delicate American hue, so fondly cherished by our town and (shame to them!) country-bred girls, not like Jessie deprived of the benign agencies of nature by insane tyranny; a hue as fleeting as the bloom on the fruit, or the tint of the rose, and which is sure, at the first strain of life, to fade into a pale, sickly, parchment-like color. Happy and rare the native beauty that escapes this fearful and sudden transition.

We wonder that a lovely flower should bloom and die unseen; but we wonder more that the gift of beauty is as perilous as it is often useless—that gift which is visibly impressed with the perfecting touch of the Creator, which is the garment of paradise, the vestment of angels. Poor Jessie was an exception to the fact, that "if women be but young and fair, they have the gift to know it." The little prisoner was as unconscious as a flower that blooms and dies in an unexplored prairie. She had one friend, Martha Young, a kind old maiden, who, with a superannuated father, lived on the floor under Manning; and one other friend, the dearest thing in life to her, her only companion and play-

fellow, the only living creature who seemed to understand her, and answer to her, who was blended with the memories of her childhood, happy in a mother's presence and love. This creature, a loving little spaniel of the King Charles breed, was always at her side, sleeping or waking; to him, her "darling Beau," she talked freely, laughed when he was tricksome, and—for nature will have an outlet—did her romping with him, when her father fell into the death-like sleeps that followed his feverish wakeful nights. Nature takes her dues with a stern hand.

It was during one of these blessed oblivions of Manning, and in the midst of a gambol with Beau, that the door was cautiously opened by Martha, who well knew how to interpret the noise over her head. The fairies' visits were not more welcome to Cinderella, than Martha's to her protégé. The appearance of that coarse-featured face, and grizzled head was sunshine to Jessie's heart.

"I knew he was in one of his sleeps," said Martha, nodding her head toward Manning, "and so I just run up to bring you some calves'-head jell Madam Copley sent to father; it's healthy, dear—none of your boughten stuff, made out of nobody knows what. Madam Copley has the best of every thing, and she is good to the poor, especially to father, that was brought up in her father's house, and spent his well days, and strong days there, and people thinks the family ought to support him now, but I don't; rich folks can't do every thing, and besides, I think—I hope I ain't proud—that the bread I earn is sweeter, and somehow more nourishing to us both, than if rich folks gave it; but Jessie, dear, how I am running on."

"I love to hear you, Miss Martha."

"Bless you, poor little dear! that's 'cause you are lonesome, and hear nobody else, for I never was any thing to talk; I can *do*, pretty well, but my strength is rather a fail-

ing, and if it should give out before father dies!" Martha's eyes filled with tears. "Well," she continued, "I won't borrow trouble, that's a mistrusting o' Providence."

"Please sit down, Miss Martha," said Jessie, tenderly laying her hand on the old woman's arm, and drawing a chair toward her.

"Oh, no, little dearie, no, he might wake sudden, and then there'd be a—" row, she would have added, but Martha had old-fashioned notions of filial respect, obedience, etc., and she swallowed the "row," and said, "a disturbance; poor man! I think he is a little out."

"A little what, Miss Martha?" asked Jessie, and looked up eagerly, as if catching at the solution of a mystery.

"Oh, never mind, dearie! go on in your obedient, patient ways with him, and you'll have your reward—remember the only commandment with promise."

"I don't know what you mean, Miss Martha."

"Why, poor little dear, don't you know your commandments?"

"No, I think I don't know any thing."

"Then they are written in a 'raculous way on the table of your heart, as the ministers say, for I'm sure you keep them; but, Jessie, you know how to read?"

"Yes, I remember my mother used to say I could read as well as she could, when I was five years old, and I had lots of pretty books at home. I have none here."

"But I often hear you reading?"

"Yes, in father's books—to him—all day, sometimes, but I don't understand them, and he don't explain them, and I think he often does not hear them; only when I am very tired, and stop, he bids me go on."

"Let me look at them," said Miss Martha, and putting on her spectacles, she examined the title-pages of half a dozen sceptical or atheistical books lying on the table; they were

Greek to her, and, happily, on subjects quite beyond her horizon.

"They seem to be a kind o' religious reading," she said, "but I guess they are dry and odd;" in *his* way, she added, mentally. "Well, if he won't dislike it, dearie, I can get you lots of tracts at Mrs. Copley's. She's bountiful of tracts. But I must not stay; and, oh, dear, how forgetful I am growing! here's this rose that I have been watching, and nursing for you two weeks, and now it is not fully out. I had like to have carried it away."

"I am so glad you did not; thank you, Miss Martha. Is not Miss Martha kind, Beau?"

"La, me! how he wags his tail, as if he sensed every word you speak."

"He does, Miss Martha, if I look at him when I speak, or just call his name." Happy faith, Jessie.

"Poor little doggy! I wonder if I can find something for you" said old Martha, and rummaging to the lowest depths of an almost fathomless pocket, she drew out a cake. "There you are!" she said, giving it to Jessie for her pet. "I somehow almost always providentially find a trifle in my pocket, just when it's wanted. I bought that, yesterday, of the poor old soul that sits at the corner. She had sot all day out in the cold fog. She thanked me for the bare penny I spent on her, and now, you are thanking me again—a penny goes a great ways. I should not have been so lucky as to have that penny, only a lady took five pence off my work, for it not being done as well as usual. My eyes is a failing," continued Martha, with a deep sigh, "that's a fact! When I sit alone, Jessie, a sewing, and a sewing, and a moralizing, I think to myself, Poor folks are favored about some things. If we do a kindness, or give ever so little, it's like falling dew, it don't make no noise, but it's nourishing, and your rich Pharisees may come down with gold in showers, and

they kind o' roll off, and leave a scar, or a barren spot. But all rich folks aren't Pharisees, Jessie. I know them that's like the early and latter rain, and the clear shining of the sun after it."

Jessie probably understood old Martha, in spite of her somewhat parabolical style, for nestling close to her, and patting Beau, who was eating the cake by crumbs from her white dimpled hand—a neat savory little dish—she said, "Yes, Miss Martha, it's so pleasant when you come into our room, and Beau and I love you; don't we, Beau?" Beau replied with a conclusive wag, and Martha departed, inhaling her own "dews."

Every creature who lives a true life, belongs to the cloud of heavenly witnesses. Among these, we claim to enroll Martha Young, for she was an actuality—an honest reality in a world of shams and shadows. She was an "old maid," and lived and died without the bribes and recompenses with which Providence has seen fit to strew the beaten road of matrimony. Martha had the pleasing consciousness that her single life was her choice, for though she had never, even in her youth, charmed the outward eye, she had been twice sought in marriage by thriving tradesmen, worldly-wise widowers. Martha shook her head, and said, she "did not feel like leaving the old folks." Both parents were then living, and both mainly dependent on her toils for their livelihood, and wholly dependent on her presence for their happiness. So she toiled on; and being a skilled sempstress, and having rich employers, and being in her own person a stern economist, she kept, as she said, "the springs and hinges oiled," and life glided smoothly. Martha was as happy in her place—and for the same reason—as the Roman emperor, whose day was never without its good deed. She was eyes to the blind, and crutches to the lame, and she watched with the poor sick, who felt her cheery presence like the letting in of

fresh air and sunshine. But to Martha, as to most of us, came the time when "the windows were darkened," when her eyes began to grow dim, and her over-tasked hands to tremble. "I don't look for'ard," was her favorite declaration; "I'm in good hands, and I ain't afeard." It was simply said, but it expressed a Christian's faith, full of peace.

"Well, Beau, darling," said Jessie, after Miss Martha had retired, as she still sat feeding the little spaniel, and stroking his long silky ears, "you and I have it pleasant sometimes, don't we? Wait a minute, pet, till I put my rose in water—there now. Oh, how sweet it is! If poor father would only notice it when he awakes. He used to love to give me flowers. I remember when he used to bring me such big bunches of moss-rose buds from Covent Garden market. Poor father!" she fixed her dove-like eyes tenderly upon him—"he is not like that now. What did he bring me away for? Mother was so sweet and pretty, and father was so merry and laughing. He never laughs now—never—never!" The brimming tears swelled over, and dropped on the little spaniel's upturned face; he started. "Oh, never mind, pet, we can't help crying sometimes, you know. Don't you remember, Beau, father's great shop, full of such handsome things! and that pretty sign with the silver candlesticks, '*Manning, Leason, & Co.?*' You do—you wag your clever little tail! And don't you remember that dreadful day he came home and said, 'I'm ruined! I'm ruined! Leason is a—.' Oh he spoke such words, I can't say them to you, Beau. And then, when he came home in the evening, and Mr. Leason was there. That was the horrid time! He was angry with mother; and he said the maid told him Mr. Leason kissed mother, and he struck him, and there was a fight—and mother caught me in her arms and ran up stairs, and you came after, yelping and barking. Oh it was so horrid! And the very next day it was that he

crammed his clothes and mine into a trunk, and he took me off in a carriage; and you came running after, you dear good little fellow, through all London streets, and away to the place where a great ship was just sailing for New York; and you sprang into the little boat they rowed us to the ship in—but we did not think he would keep us away from poor mother forever, and forever—did we, Beau?" The poor child laid her head, as she had done a hundred times before, after a like soliloquy, on Beau's neck and wept, while her little companion looked wistfully in her face, now and then uttering a low sympathetic yelp.

Jessie has indicated all that she knew of her sad story, and all that we know of it up to this time, except that Manning had continued in this wretched attic for five years, under the visitation of a hopeless monomania.

CHAPTER IX.

"An arm of aid to the weak,
A friendly hand to the friendless—
Kind words so short to speak,
But whose echo is endless.
The world is wide—these things are small—
They may be nothing, but they may be all."

"I come to you for advice, Mr. Lisle," said the agent of a rich landlord to Archibald. "One of our tenants is refractory. I think the man is half crazy; he has been punctual till last quarter-day, but now he has thrown up work, and I doubt if he ever works again. I hate to be harsh with the old soul, especially as he has a slip of a girl—a modest, simple child she seems, though she may be sixteen; and what is worst of all in her case, she is a beauty, no mistake—and no friend to look to but him, except a purblind old maid, who has all she can do to make up her own rent. She lives in the same house; she is getting aged, and depends on her needle. It's devilish hard work, this getting rents out of poor, hard-working people. I wish Mr. Alton would try collecting his own rents one year; I think he would feel his own roof-tree to stand firmer for a little easing to others. But my duty must be done."

"Well, Macy, what is it you want of me?" asked Lisle, whose heart was not crushed out of him by two years' devotion—since we last met him—to pressing and repressing the sordid claims of man.

"That's just it. I want you to go with me to Mott-street and examine the man, and see if we had not best get a permit for him to go to the pauper insane asylum. He is a foreigner, and has no one to look to but the public."

"And what is to become of his child?"

"She can get a place, probably—she may go to the alms-house in the mean while."

"There should be room enough in the world for the poor thing," thought Lisle, and silently deliberating how that room could be found, or made, he forthwith went with Macy to Mott-street. They reached the house tenanted by Manning, and paused on its broken step.

"Stop a minute, Mr. Lisle," said Macy, "and observe this tenement as we go into it, and you will not wonder that I detest my business. I have the renting of fifty such, more or less. Look at those crazy windows, rattling in this cold, gusty wind. It is enough to tear to pieces the nerves of the poor, half-mad man up stairs. There are five tenants, all decent, rent-paying people, in this house—not a comfort nor a convenience in it. The tenants are obliged to lug their water by the pail from the next hydrant, up a dark and steep staircase, the balustrade of which is liable to give way any day. Each apartment must have its wretched cooking-stove, and there is only a common receptacle for the fuel of all, which leads to innumerable controversies among the decent tenants, and fights among the worst of them. The walls are dirty and ragged, and the floors are broken. Observe for yourself. I have mentioned the subject again and again to Mr. Alton, but, Lord bless you! he does not think of it again—not he, in his palace with all the 'modern improvements,' heated with steam, lighted with gas, with dumb-waiters and speaking-pipes, and frescoed walls, and floors covered with imperial carpets—how should it ever occur to him that the same Maker who 'fashioned

him in the womb' fashioned his poor tenants, and fashioned them with members as delicate as his? I wish I were Mr. Alton, or any other rich landlord! You smile, Mr. Lisle; you are thinking I would not do better than the rest of them?"

Lisle did smile rather sadly, as he replied, "There is a vast deal of self-delusion indicated in those common phrases, 'if I were you,' and 'if I were he.' But," he added, looking in Macy's kind, open face, "I am ashamed, if I implied distrust of you. There is a difference in landlords."

"That's a fact, Mr. Lisle. I know some landlords who are building and repairing, with as much of an eye to the tenant's advantage as their own; that's what I call 'live, and let live.' But come, we must go ahead."

They entered the house, mounted the first flight of stairs, passed Martha Young's open door, and were groping their way round the dark passage to the second staircase, when they heard terrific shrieks in the attic, and a door, at the top of the second stairs, was thrown open, and Jessie, followed by her raving father, half sprang, half fell down the stairs. The crazy balustrade gave way at the pressure of her slight weight. Lisle caught her in his arms, and while Macy struggled with the madman, he carried her, half fainting and nearly unconscious, into Martha Young's room, and then, without waiting to hear Martha's broken explanations, and piteous lamentations over her, he returned to Macy's aid.

Manning resisted for some time, with the preternatural strength of insanity; but it was soon exhausted, and he sunk to the floor, his incoherent raving ceased; he was breathless and impotent.

Lisle and Macy carried him to his room. Animation soon returned, with a senseless chattering, and tearless sobs. Martha was summoned. She said that for the last three months "he had been failing, getting more and more 'out;' and for

the last month he had not done a stroke of work, and had not eaten enough to keep a fly alive; and, as to poor, dear little Jessie," Martha said, "she has not eaten much more, only the crumbs, as you may say—she and Beau—that fell from my poor table. This morning Manning's employer came to look after him, and seeing how it was, he took away all his work, and missing some stones, that the poor man may have dropped in the ashes, he took off his tools. Jessie says this seemed to wake her father up, and all of a sudden, when he heard your footsteps, a flash came over him, and the poor child, scared out of her wits, was flying to me, when, by the mercifulest Providence that ever happened, you saved her, sir, from falling to the very bottom-floor of the house, and saved the beautifulest, best little soul that ever was sent into this hard-going world, sir."

Lisle mentally assented to the "beautifulest," from the mere glance he had had of the lovely creature whom he had so strangely rescued from impending death. He offered to remain to guard Manning, while Macy went off to attend to the proper formalities and means of his removal to the asylum for insane paupers on Blackwell's Island, there being now no further question as to the propriety of his bestowment there.

In the mean time he learned all that Martha could tell him of Jessie's story, and that was no more than our readers already know, for though two years have passed since their first introduction to her, nothing could be more uniform, more eventless than her secluded life. The two years that had perfected her beauty, had brought poor Martha two years further into the decline and diminished light of waning life. Her father still lived, far gone into second childhood, and still patiently and most kindly provided for. "Here I stand," she concluded her account of herself and her protégé to Lisle, "a failing creatur—on one side of me the

poor mouldering trunk of a tree that I once leaned against, and on the other, this little blossoming vine that clings to poor old me, and has no other earthly thing to cling to."

"But, my good friend," said Lisle, who had learned from Martha her small and abating means of gaining her living, "she must have other support;" and after a few moments of consideration, he added, "Keep her with you, she can not have a kinder friend;" and taking out his purse, he continued, "I will pay you her board in advance for a month, and continue to pay it till she can be better provided for."

A deep crimson spread over Martha's pale old cheeks. "No—sir!" she said, with a pause between the words, and a decided emphasis on both; "put up your purse, sir. You look displeased; you need not, for I don't mistrust you in the least, sir. I see written on your face—and any one that can read any thing can read it—the 'further commandment' and the best of all. But, sir, though I don't know much that's going on t' other side of these four walls, yet I do know New York ain't a *district* where a handsome young creatur can be boarded out by a young gentleman, without it being turned up against her some time or other."

"My good woman, who is to know it but you and I?"

"That's one too many," answered Martha, with a smile. "My father, poor old man, for as childish as he is now, was wise in his day, and he used to say, if you want to spread news, tell it to one woman, and you give it wings. No use in talking, sir. I have been turning over a plan for this pretty little dear, for a long while, and when one door shuts, another opens, sir. I can get as much work as both her and I can do, and though my hands have come to a trembling, and my eyes are a failing, yet I can teach her; and when the time comes that must come, I can get her a sempstress' place with one of my families. My old father can't be spared much longer, but then I sha'n't be left altogether destitute;

I shall have something to love, and that will love me, and I suppose you know that to love and be loved is pretty much all there is to live for. There is poor little Jessie—you should see her with her dog—it's her all—the world—sir!"

The poor old woman would have run on, for the sluices of her heart were opened, and she had found a willing and admiring listener, but she was interrupted by the slow timid opening of the door, and Jessie, white as a snow-flake, and as noiseless, fluttered in.

She shuddered as she looked at her father, and dropping her head on Martha's shoulder, she sighed out, "How is he now, Miss Martha?"

"Just as you see, dear, as one may say; nothing now—no thoughts—no feelings—shattered to bits—but cheer up, little dear! 'the world is his who has patience.' His poor dying body will be cared for; he is to be taken where he will be kindly looked after."

Jessie raised her eyes bashfully to Lisle, and an effluence of consolation seemed to proceed from his benignant countenance. Her anxious look changed to the sweet peace of a child that is assured of all it wants.

"I have never seen any one half so beautiful as this child-girl," thought Lisle. "A'n't my plan prudent?" asked Martha, smiling at Archibald's involuntary gaze; and when he emphatically assented, she added, "but some things are set off by other things; the prettiest flower I ever did see, grew up and hung over the side of an old stump of a tree, covered with weather marks and black moss." Poor Martha's symbol of herself was as just as it was unwomanly; nor was there any ground-swell of vanity, when Lisle said, with a smile, "I understand you."

Before the new acquaintance parted that day, Archibald again proffered aid in a mode he thought unquestionable.

"You will allow me, my friend," he said to Martha, "to leave a small sum for your father?"

"No, sir. May be you know, sir, the pride and comfort of earning independent bread, and a sharing it with parents or the like; if you do, you'll excuse me—that's all my life, sir!" Archibald had known fully that pride and comfort; and the gifted and successful young lawyer felt a hearty sympathy with the poor old sempstress, and felt, as he returned his purse to his pocket, that they had a community of imperishable goods.

"I hope you won't think me proud, sir!" continued Martha. "May be I am, though, for pride has many faces, and one may well grow proud that has always the privilege of doing. Any way, sir, I am thankful to you, and if ever I need help, I'll prove it by first asking it of you."

The fancies of an idle young man might have been haunted by the beautiful image of Jessie Manning, but, as our readers know, Archibald Lisle was not an idle young man, and besides, his imagination was so pre-possessed by one image that all other impressions were trivial and transient. The passage in Mott-street was a mere parenthesis in his life, and was soon followed by such new and varied scenes that it passed into utter oblivion.

Lisle felt it to be a most unmanly folly to yield to a passion he believed hopeless, and he had, for the blank years in our narrative, abstained from every place where he should probably meet Grace Herbert. He devoted himself unremittingly to his business. He allowed himself no variety and no relaxation, and in the year following his visit to Mott-street, he met the necessary consequences of too severe application to business without any interval of recreation, or social refreshment. The mind can no more bear unvaried and unintermitted work, than the body can endure a strain

on one set of muscles. Lisle became ill, and his illness took the perilous form of typhus fever. It was when he was at the worst, and when his two devoted friends, Walter Herbert and Esterly, had given strict orders to his nurse that no one, on any pretext, should be admitted to him, that poor old Martha Young, much aged since we last saw her, begged with sorrowful earnestness to be permitted to speak with Mr. Lisle, and when denied and told of his fearful illness, she turned away murmuring, "It's always just so! it never rains but it pours!"

Walter Herbert watched over Lisle with the vigilant tenderness of a parent. Dinners were forgone, his wine scarcely tasted, half his daily luxury of cigars forgotten; and when he had the unexpected happiness of seeing his friend fairly convalescing, he was, as he said, as light-hearted as a boy. "Upon my word, Archy," he said, "I can hardly help telling the people in the street, whether I know them or not, that you are getting well!"

"That I am, is owing to you," replied Lisle, in a tone that answered feebly to Uncle Walter's exulting voice. "You, I believe, have saved my life."

"Saved your life! Lord, man—I can't even keep the blue devils away from you; the best of us are good for nothing at a sick-bed—the women are the angels—the conjurers there. Why, Archy, if it were not for the pain, it would be a luxury for me to have a fit of the gout, for Eleanor to brew my possets, and Grace to caress, and amuse me. Lisle, you do not begin to know that girl. You have only seen her in the drawing-room, where, for the matter of knowing the variety, the power, the sweetness, the divine nature of such a woman as Grace, why, you might as well look at her full-length picture." Uncle Walter had no design in opening the flood-gates of his heart. He had only obeyed an impulse, but he had opened

them, and it was hard to shut them. However, he did shut them, saying, "I am talking too much—your color comes and goes like a nervous woman's, while I am running on in this way. But you are gaining, my boy, and you will come round."

But Lisle did not "come round;" and the food supplied to his fancies by Uncle Walter's perpetual recurrence to his favorite, did not help him to "come round." He was weak, and fretted like a child, by seeing an unattainable good placed in the most glowing lights perpetually before his eyes.

Week after week of tedious convalescence wore away, if that might be called convalescence, where there was neither vigor of body nor cheerfulness of mind—no approach to sound health. The doctor shook his head and said there was nothing for it but for his patient to give up his anxiety to return to his office—to abandon it altogether, and to go abroad for a year's rest and recreation. His two friends seconded the suggestion, Walter Herbert vehemently—"There is no use, Archy," he said, "in fighting the blue devils here. You must go abroad; there is reason in the old superstition, that this sort of gentry can't cross the water." Lisle answered with a faint smile. He thought it would be far easier to eject a legion of blue devils, than to drive out the one angel that had entered in, and taken possession of mind and heart. He assented, however, to the reasons of his friends, and deciding to run the fearful risk of suspending his business for a time, he arranged his affairs, and reluctantly diverted to his foreign expenses the earnings he had set apart to build his father a new house.

"Shall I bring Eleanor and Grace with me to the ship, to-morrow morning, Lisle, to bid you good-bye?" asked Uncle Walter.

"Oh, yes!" he answered; but after a moment's pause added, in a faint tone, "No—no—you had best not. I am miserably weak, and shall need all my manhood to part from you and Esterly." The next day he sailed for Havre.

CHAPTER X.

"Je n'ai ni bien, ni rang, ni gloire,
Mais j'ai beaucoup, beaucoup d'amour."

Martha Young, with the common feeling that a lawyer's pen has some latent magic, had sought Lisle, in the hope that a letter he should write might reach Jessie's mother when all she had heretofore sent had failed. Turning, sorely disappointed, from his door, she next sought and gained admittance to Madam Copley, an old patron—*patronage* being the word she selected to express her employment of a capital sempstress, at moderate wages. But Martha was meekly grateful; and Madam Copley entered the patronage on the credit side of her spiritual records. Alas, for the Madam Copleys; another hand than theirs must balance their accounts.

If it be not a popular fallacy that mothers shape the morale of their childrens' character, it may be well to give a more expanded introduction of the mother of Horace Copley. She was born of the privileged class—in our medieval national life, when we confessed such a class—and she had gone from youth to age erectly forward on a beaten road. As a young woman, she was observant of precepts, and proprieties. She was confirmed at the prescribed age, and married at the right time, combining her position and fortune with their exact equivalents. She had claimed the honors of wifehood, and motherhood, and when, in

process of time, she became a widow, she exhibited the charities that the world holds to be the fitting garniture of that condition. Her affection for her son had the exacting, and intense quality of self-love. Even a mother's love, that divine inspiration, is adulterated in a worldly spirit. But Madam Copley was a model-woman, uniformly well spoken of in life, and destined, at her departure, to be illustrated by a long obituary, and an elaborate epitaph. The world is very kind to its formalists; but "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit, and in truth."

When Martha Young entered Mrs. Copley's formidable presence, she was so paled and aged in the few months since her patron had seen her, that she did not recognize her till she had put on her spectacles. "Oh, it's you, Martha Young, is it?" she said; "why, what's the matter, woman? You may sit down." The bend of the lady's very stiff neck expressed her conscious condescension.

"Why, Madam Copley," said Martha, sinking into a chair, "there is not so very much the matter of me. I am not so strong as I once was, and I am leg-weary; and I have just met with a little disappointment." She wiped away tears. "Excuse me, madam, tears come without leave, now-a-days. I think it's anxiety that's pulled me down so."

"You should not indulge anxiety, Martha; you are a professing Christian."

"Oh, I know it's sinful, ma'am. I have always found it true, that, sufficient to the day is the evil thereof—poor folks a most part do. Anxiety was never my besetment, so Satan takes me unawares. But, Madam Copley, when one has helpless age on one side, a depending, and more helpless youth t'other, and health is a failing, and strength pretty much gone, so that one lies down every night, afeard next day will be too much for them, why, Madam Copley, 'tis not very pleasant, you know, ma'am,"

Madam Copley did not know, and she had not those ready sympathies that are a substitute for experience. She looked at her watch, and rung the bell to order her carriage. "I have no more time to spare, Martha," she said; "you know I never fail at morning prayers during Lent. My housekeeper will give you a bundle of work, and here is a dollar for you."

"Oh, it is not that I am after, Madam Copley; thank God I have not come to beggary, though I am every day a looking for it."

"What is it then you want? tell me quickly, Martha." Martha began rather confusedly far back in Jessie's story. Madam Copley interrupted her. "My good woman," she said, "I have no time to hear any romantic story about a pretty girl; they go for nothing with me, you know. I am connected with so many benevolent societies, that I am quite used to them, and tired of them. It's my duty I do, independent of all circumstances," and the lady bridled up her head in conscious Roman virtue. "There's the carriage—despatch, Martha, and tell me what you want." Martha, eager to gain her point, was frightened into directness and brevity. She told Madam Copley how she had devoted the last six months to teaching Jessie Manning the art and mystery of her craft, how the neat-handed "little dear" had profited by her instruction; how, feeling her own strength over-taxed by the care of her father—now utterly helpless, and fearing, each day, that they might both have no place but the alms-house, she was desirous to place Jessie in a safe position, and it had come into her mind somehow, that Madam Copley, partly from charity, and partly that she might "be a wanting more help than she had for sewing, would take the poor little dear." It so happened, that Martha hit half the truth. Madam Copley intended to pass the coming summer at watering-places; her sempstress was to

be transferred to the place of lady's-maid, and Jessie would opportunely fill the void. "Of course," Madam Copley said, "she should not choose a young and inexperienced girl, but she was always one that sacrificed herself. The child would not expect full wages?"

"Wages were no object," Martha said; "it was kindness the poor little dear wanted, and a home out of danger, and all temptations."

"For that, she could not do better than to come to me," interposed Madam Copley. "I discourage visitors, and dress, and amusement, and every thing of the kind in my servants, and always require them to be at morning and evening prayers. Immediately after Easter we go to the country, so you may send her to-morrow, Martha; it's providential your applying to me just now."

"I hope so, ma'am," said Martha; but somehow the prospect did not seem so cheering to her as to assume the aspect of a providence, and she went away with so heavy a heart as almost to warrant the belief that dark events do cast their shadows before.

"It's hard giving up the little fluttering dove that I have cherished, as it were, in my own bosom," thought Martha; but she presented the best aspect of the change to Jessie, and reserved her tears and sighs for the night, and all night; and the next week, Jessie went from the battered tenement, where love was, to the splendid habitation of the self-righteous Madam Copley, where it was not.

Mrs. Copley's family were removed the following week to her beautiful country place on the Hudson. A little room overlooking a garden, was assigned to Jessie—a garden of Eden to her—fruits, flowers, fiend, and all. Baskets of sewing for the whole summer, were profusely provided by Mrs. Copley's maid, and industry enjoined by the mistress, whom she only saw at morning and evening prayers, and

who, on her departure for the summer, delivered herself of a long lecture upon the duties of a servant to her employer. The duties of the higher contracting party were left a blank.

But Jessie was happy, never so happy. She breathed for the first time in her life, the air of sweet blossoming spring in the country. The wondrous volume of Nature was open before her. The rapid processes of vegetation amazed her. Every opening flower was to her the miracle it is; every singing bird God's messenger. For weeks this new life was an enchantment to her. She found time, and did her tasks most dutifully, to wander over the garden, and along the river-side in the early morning, or through the long summer twilights, with her little spaniel frisking at her heels, and she enjoyed all with the freshness of childhood, and the zest of a newly-created spirit. After a while, the keenness of novelty was dulled; she longed for companionship. She thought much of her mother, and with little hope, but much longing, wrote again and again to her. Fond thoughts reverted to poor old Martha, and she would murmur aloud, "I should like to spend a day again in that poor, dear, dark old room, and sit down on my little bench at Miss Martha's feet, and lay my head on her lap, and feel her dear old hand patting it; hey, Beau, would not it be nice?" But Beau fared sumptuously every day; fortune had corrupted him, as it sometimes does his betters. He had grown lazy, and luxurious, and he wagged his tail languidly.

"Oh, you naughty Beau," said Jessie, "you arn't half so lively, and loving, as you used to be, and I think my heart is getting stony, living in this great, beautiful, lonely place."

At this moment, Beau sprang up with a growl. It was a sure token a stranger was near. Growl on, Beau, your instincts are true! A stranger to Jessie and Beau was there—Mr. Horace Copley, the future master of the place;

and a very handsome, sweet-looking young gentleman, Jessie thought, as she turned her startled look upon him.

"What a gem to be sparkling in this solitude," he thought. "I believe," he said, in a gentle voice, "you are Mrs. Copley's—my mother's sempstress? I am here for a few days from Newport, where I left her; she desired me to inquire for some linen you were to send her."

From this moment, what a change came over the spirit of Jessie's life-dream! What enchantments followed! What a new and thrilling companionship! What stealthy rowings by moonlight on the Hudson! What pretty gifts, ribbons, 'kerchiefs, rings, chains! What tender words! What fond promises of 'sweet breath compounded!' What caressing of her pretty hands! What partings, and what meetings! Newport no longer attracted Copley. In vain its beautiful aspirants lamented his sudden passion for farming. In vain was he reminded by messages from his fair fashionable lovers of promises to be present at "yacht races, fancy balls, and theatricals." He came not; or if he came, it was for a hurried day to talk to his mother of changes to be made on the place, that no eye but his could oversee. Poor Jessie! she, the while, like an unconscious child, was plucking flowers on the brink of a precipice.

Madam Copley returned to her home in October, and on the very evening of her arrival, Jessie, at her humble request, was admitted to her presence. She was wan, pale, and dejected, and wrapped in a shawl. Madam Copley stared at her for a moment, uncertain if she were the girl she had left. "Why, child!" she exclaimed, when she had assured herself by a gaze at the lovely features, that it was the same, "what ails you? what makes you so shaky? have you had the chills?"

"No, madam," said Jessie. The world was all a chill to her.

"I am glad it is not that; I should be very sorry to have chills and fever on the place. Neither I nor my son could stand it." This seemed an audible reflection of the prudent lady. "Sit down, girl," she continued. Jessie sat down; she could not stand, for weakness and dread. "Stop that dog's yelping!" Jessie opened the door and took up Beau, who was vehemently pawing against it, and again sank into her seat. "You must send away that animal," resumed the lady; "I never allow dogs here."

"We are both going away, ma'am, please."

"You going to leave! too sick to work?"

"I am, ma'am," said Jessie, scarcely audibly. "My month was up yesterday, and I think—I—I hope, I may be better in the city."

"You've no reason to hope any such thing. The country is far better for you; but that's the way with you all—crazy after the city! You may take two or three weeks to recruit. John shall give you a ride now and then; there's nobody more indulgent to servants than I am."

"I wish to go, Madam Copley."

"Oh, I dare say you do; but it's all nonsense. We shall all go to town at Christmas; that's quite time enough." Madam Copley paused, and Jessie, making no reply, she resumed: "You are too young to judge for yourself. Stay where you are well off; I believe no one ever complained of my want of liberality; you are very young, child, but I will overlook that. I will raise your wages when you go back to work."

"I can not stay, ma'am," replied Jessie. There was decision in her very weakness, and Madam Copley yielded, saying, after she had called to her maid to reckon up Jessie's dues, and pay her, "You are all alike; you never know when you are well off. Where will you get the privileges you have here? and I wonder who will make you the offers

I have." Mrs. Copley's offers were based upon the conviction that she had never had so neat-handed a sempstress as Jessie.

She replied not a word, but took her wages meekly and crept to her room, and when there, laid her head on Beau's, and wept in agony till quieted by nature's great nurse.

As Jessie left the room by one door, Horace Copley entered by another. He threw a piercing glance at his mother, and then adjusting his cravat before a mirror, he said carelessly, "Was that the little sempstress that left the room as I came in?"

"Yes; she is to leave to-morrow."

"Why? does she not suit you?"

"Yes, remarkably; but she is sick or fancies she is; it's probably only a hankering for the city; and the city will, in all probability, be her ruin. Satan lies in wait there for pretty, thoughtless girls!"

This last trite remark met no response from Mr. Horace, though it fell distinctly on his ear, as he was leaving the room, humming an air from the last opera. He had attained the object of his visit to his mother's apartment, ascertained satisfactorily that there was nothing of a confidential nature in her interview with Jessie. And the next morning this little stray lamb went forth without one provision for her future, or one pitying thought from the pharisaical woman who kept on in her smooth path of self-complacencies to the end. But that end must come, when those who touch not the load of human sorrows with one of their fingers, are to be judged by Him who says, 'blessed are the merciful.'

At an appointed place, Jessie was met by Mr. Copley's own man. She was startled and distressed by the alternations of insolence and pity in his manner. He conducted her in a carriage to a house in Mercer-street, where he introduced her to the mistress of the house, a middle-aged

woman, and there left her. She was then put into possession of an apartment, and told that Mr. Copley had "provided the needful for the future, and done every thing handsome by her."

Left alone, she gave way to tears and sobs; and having cried till she felt relieved, she wiped away her tears and made an effort to consider her present and her future with all the little wisdom she had. Wisdom! she had none of it beyond the instincts of a pure nature—never, perhaps, except it were the lad Caspar Hauser, had a human being lived in this world, with less acquaintance with it than Jessie Manning. She had been betrayed by that very simplicity, and

> "Goodness that thinks no ill,
> Where no ill seems."

She knew she had loved—she believed she had been loved—she knew she had been wronged—she feared she was deserted, and mingling with, and embittering all, was a confused sense of shame and degradation. A mere instinct of self-reproach it was. Who, of all the world could have cast the first stone at her?

"He promised to come soon to see me," she thought; "will he? God forgive me for wishing he should. I can't help it, I can't help it! But what kind of a place is this he has sent me to?"

She cast her eyes around the room upon the tarnished gilding, the soiled embroidered curtains, fantastic French vases, and faded artificial flowers. "I don't like it," she thought; "oh, if I could be in some little place, with but a pillow to lay my aching head upon, far away from every body, above all, from this bad-looking woman! But, perhaps he will come, and when I hear his soft voice I shall feel better. I ought not, God forgive me!"

Jessie had a quick and nice perception of wrong—a delicate sense, implanted by her Creator; perhaps developed by the early teaching of her mother. We know not whence it came—it was there.

One morning, after a frightful night of riotous noises in the disorderly house, she meditated on a possible plan of escape from it. Her abhorrence of her surroundings became intolerable, her heart was wrung with anguish. "I can not stay here," she said, "I am afraid of every thing. I can no longer bear the looks of that woman; her eye blisters me. Oh, if I were only back to old times with Miss Martha." Her heart, for a moment, seemed to stop its beating. "She would pity me, I know she would!" she exclaimed aloud unconsciously, and unconscious even that Beau, at the sound of her voice, sprang into her lap.

"She would pity me, and forgive me, and love me for all. I will go to her; yes, Beau"—the little dog was looking wistfully in her face—"we will go to her; we will leave this horrid place, and this horrid woman. I have read that God hears the ravens when they cry to him for food—oh, I am starving for something more than food—surely he will hear me!"

She sank on her knees and uttered a single cry for help. That cry, we can not doubt, was heard and accepted, though to human sense mysteriously answered.

She rose to her feet calmer, and more calmly surveyed her present and her future. She took out her purse and counted her lawful wages: the sum was small. "It will help us, Miss Martha and me," she thought. Then she took a roll of bank notes, which Copley had slidden into her hand at parting, and without looking at them, she threw them into the grate, and as they vanished in the burning coals—"Oh," thought she, "that memory would but go so!" A harder task remained. She unbuttoned her sleeve,

turned it up, and unclasped from her arm a beautiful bracelet—"With what smiles and kisses he fastened it there!" she said, "oh, dear! oh, dear!" She then proceeded to take a breast-pin from her collar—a serpent of gold and enamel, with small brilliants for its eyes; she shuddered: did it strike her as a symbol? and last, a delicate gold necklace from beneath her neckerchief. She looked at the charms attached to it, one by one, slowly, and for the last time, and sighed as she thought she had looked at them with him, when he explained them to her. She then put them all into a mother-of-pearl box, which Copley had given to her, and enveloping it in paper, sealed and directed it to him, and left the parcel in a drawer of the bureau assigned her. She then locked her trunk, and putting on it a card inscribed "to remain till sent for," she slid it into a closet, out of sight, and ringing a bell, desired to "speak with the lady of the house." The person, so called by courtesy, appeared, and when asked to send for a carriage, as her lodger wanted to go out on some business, she replied, in a manner that made poor Jessie more than ever eager to go, "And could not you tell that to the waiter, without sending for me? I am willing to treat you as a lady how-come-you-so? but no airs of a real lady here!" It was evident from the woman's inflamed cheeks that she, at the moment, forgot the rich patron she was serving.

The carriage came, and Jessie directed the coachman to Martha's number in Mott-street. She tottered up the steps and entered the old dark familiar entry, followed by Beau, who sprang up the stairs, and before Jessie could reach it, was pawing and whining at Martha Young's door. It was locked; Jessie knocked, and repeated the knock, and a woman opened the next door, and said, "You want to look at the room? I'll bring the key." And so she did, before Jessie could answer her, and unlocked and threw open the

door. There was no living creature within. The old man's bed was nicely made up; Martha's little cot beside it; that hospitable table, to which the hungry had always had a welcome, was placed in the middle of the room, with Martha's little store of household linen, well preserved with darning and patching, piled on one end of it; the rest was covered with her old crockery, and small store of domestic utensils. The drawers of her bureau were open, exposing her wearing apparel and her father's, all neatly arranged. "You see," said the officious woman, who had unlocked the door, "it's fixed for the auction, that comes off to-morrow morning. After that, you can have possession, if you like the place."

"But where," asked Jessie, apprehensive and trembling, "where is Miss Martha?"

"Miss Martha! landsakes! in heaven, child, she is. If ever any body made a clear spring there, 'twas she!"

Jessie turned deadly pale, and gazed at the woman with a sort of stupefaction. She went on: "Are you kin to her, or friend to her, and did not know she and the old gentleman died the same day?"

The shock and the disappointment were too much for poor Jessie. She staggered into the room. It turned dark. She endeavored to grope her way to the bed, and just reaching it, sank fainting to the floor. The woman at the door, according to the usage established among her compeers of all ages, screamed a reveillé instead of quietly going to Jessie's help; and the tenants of the rooms, up-stairs and down, rushed out and crowded about the poor girl. Among them was one who was a tenant of the house in Manning's time, and who, at the first glance, recognized Jessie. "Lord Almighty help us!" she exclaimed, "it's the old crazy man's daughter—it's Jessie, it is! Stand back, women, all of ye —open the window—she's dead faint! Och, Mrs. Flannagan, ye mind how the poor old cratur, Martha, moaned after her,

that last day—Oh, Mary, mother! help her, that she should come back *so*. And 'twas her name that was last on ould Martha's blue cold lips; and this is her own little doggy!" and she patted Beau, who had recognized an old acquaintance, and was frisking about her with noisy demonstration. "D'ye know Maggy O'Brien, you loving brute you? Hist—she's coming to herself—stand back, women! all of ye—lave her alone with me a bit—go away—go away—all of ye!"

The women went slowly—one pitying or curious soul lingered at the door. "Did ye ever, Maggy," she said, "look upon a living cratur, so like that picture of Mary Magdalene, with her hair sweeping all about her, in the cathedral at home?"

"Not a bit of it, O'Flanagan. She's young enough to be the childer of it, and there's no look of by-gone sin in this poor crater's innocent face."

Jessie drew a long sigh, and O'Flannagan, at an earnest motion from Maggy, disappeared, and considerately shut the door after her. Jessie was bewildered. She looked up at Mistress O'Brien, then around the room. A shiver passed over her frame, and she said faintly, "What has happened? Am I dreaming? Is this Miss Martha's room? Did they tell me she was—was *dead?*"

"Oh, no—it's no such tales they should be telling you now. Don't you mind me—Maggy O'Brien, that lived in the room next the ould people?"

Jessie did, at a second glance, recognize her, "Oh, yes—thank God. It was you gave me the canary bird."

"And faith do you mind that? So it was. And do you mind how you nursed it? and so will I nurse you, if you let me lay you in the clean little bed I keep for my own childer."

Without waiting for assent or denial, she clasped her

strong arms around Jessie, and laid her, in spite of all the chances to the contrary, in a very *clean* bed, in a small, neat room adjoining hers.

It was not long before the whole short story of Martha's departure was told.

"From the day you left her, dare," said Maggy, "it seemed the poor ould soul's candle was going out. She just edged on through the summer, wearing waker and waker, and still stitching and stitching, when she had to worry maybe a half hour to find the eye of her needle—and always making every thing comfortable for the ould gentleman, till this day week he dropped off, and she sunk down like a stalk when you cut away the root of it. He went in the morning, and she was after him before the sun set. She had her reason to the last, and she sent for her minister, and she called all the sinsible women in the house —that's myself and Biddy O'Flannagan—to her bed-side; and after he prayed with her, she told him she was ready and happy to go; and she bid him to see she and her father were dacently laid beside her ould mother. And then she asked us would we make every thing ready for an auction, so that her things might be sold, and all funeral expenses paid; and then she would die as she lived, an honest woman, quit of the world? And so she was, even to seeing that me and Biddy was paid for our trouble, that she was as welcome to as water. When all was settled and done, her brain got cloudy, and one minute she'd pray to God, and it was a word for herself and two for you, 'Jessie!' 'Jessie!' 'little dear!' till the breath was out of her."

"Oh why were her dying prayers lost!" murmured poor Jessie.

"Darlint, hush—maybe they'll turn up yet. That's just what we can't tell—the why to any thing. But och," continued the good woman, after she had wiped the tears from

Jessie's face, "it would have been a drop of comfort to you to see her funeral. She, a poor lone old maid crater, as she was, to be followed by brothers and sisters, and lots of childer too, ye may call 'em—the prettiest funeral it was. Loving souls all that followed her. No kin of hers—no drop of her blood in the veins of them; but more than kin, by her loving deeds to them. There was ould Sam Farris, hobbling along on the crutches she bought for him seven years ago, he said; and there was lots of young ones that live hereabouts, that called her 'Aunty,' that she used to give peanuts to, and ginger-snaps, and so forth—and oh, but she loved to please and humor 'em; and there was Jenny McLane, grown up to a slip of a girl—widow McLane's only one—that same Martha Young watched with, years by-gone, night after night; and all the Lowry family, that she staid with when they had the typhus—it was there she got her first wakeness in her eyes; and poor Sally Bird, the simple girl she took in, when her own people cast her out, for Martha was tinder-like even to sinners."

"Oh her heart was full of love and pity," exclaimed Jessie.

"Truth it was, child, and true mourners, with their mouths full of blessings, followed her; and let the priests say what they may, it's not Maggy O'Brien that thinks St. Peter would turn his back on the like of Martha Young."

Mistress O'Brien's sympathy naturally opened Jessie Manning's heart to her; and in the course of the day she had made known her sorrows and her wants. And the idea of returning to her lodgings provided by Copley being perfectly abhorrent to her, it was concerted between them, or rather suggested by Mistress O'Brien, and acceded to by Jessie, that the former, authorized by an order from Jessie, should obtain the trunk containing her little all. Her present asylum was to be kept a secret. Mrs. O'Brien proposed

to obtain sewing for her, so long as she was able to do it, from Martha's customers, whose names and residences she knew. It would not have been so easy to have wrested the trunk from the harpy in whose possession it was, but that by opening it with one of her own keys, she ascertained there was only very simple apparel in it, not the properties fitting her establishment; and further, having espied the parcel directed to Copley, she thought she might sequester it, and leave him to believe his baubles were still in his victim's possession.

And now, and for the present, we leave Jessie Manning at not the most wretched epoch of her life.

CHAPTER XI.

"For now her father's chimney glows,
In expectation of a guest;
And, thinking this will please him best,
She takes a ribbon or a rose."

SPRING-LANE is one of those secluded, winding roads, just wide enough for the passing of two carriages, that adorn the vicinity of Boston. The hand of "improvement," reckless of beauty, and blind to nature, has yet spared it; and it is still fenced on each side with an impervious hedge of barberries, roses, spineas, and other wild shrubs, and enriched with little inclosures of independent homesteads and homes, where the dear relations and affinities exist, that are well symbolized by the bright berries and sweet flowers of the hedge-rows.

In this lane, on ascending ground, and a little above a turn round a high rock, a boulder, that stands out from the adjoining field, is a small house, nowise distinguished from other houses of its class in the neighborhood, except by being out of repair, a singular feature where thrift and order prevail. The faded paint is kindly screened by a rich mantle of honeysuckles, Roxbury wax-work (dulca-mara), and Virginia creeper, now (in October) in its most brilliant color. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the ruinous porch of this decayed house, with its crimson, scarlet, and purple hangings. The sun was just setting, the sky golden to the zenith; golden, too, were the autumn leaves as they dropped

from the boughs, stirred by the breeze, to a song of summer memories. And golden was the hue on the flaxen heads and sun-burned cheeks of two sturdy boys, who, having clambered to the top of the boulder, were flourishing, at the end of two long sticks, many-colored cotton handkerchiefs. A whistle at the nearest station of the railroad, just under the hill, was heard; they shouted, and waved their flags. Their signal was answered, and they bounded off toward the station.

"He's come, mother, he's come!" screamed a little child, who stood in the porch watching the boys.

"He's come, Letty!" echoed the mother to a damsel who stood at the window gazing out, and whose heightened color and beating heart already indicated that fact. "Why, Letty, why don't you move? I tell you he's come! Put the tea in to draw, set the chairs round the table, and put on Nat's apron."

"I don't want my apron, Letty—he can't see my boots if my apron is on," cried out the little fellow, jealous of his first display of the attributes of manhood.

While Letty did all that she was bid, and more, the matron looked at the baking biscuits, set the white sugar on the table, the smoked tongue, honey, cakes, sweetmeats, and all the accessories that had been reserved in the pantry till the frugal housewife was sure of her guest. Letty slipped a napkin into a napkin-ring, freshly embroidered with two letters in blue, and placed it, with a bouquet, on the table.

"I know those letters, Miss Letty!" cried the booted boy, "and I know who that place is for, and I know who the flowers are for!" and he snatched up the bouquet and buried his little dough-nose in it.

"Oh don't, Nat! give it to me," said Letty, dismayed at the peril of the sweet things, which seemed to her to have providentially blossomed at the right time. But she did not

recover them. Off Nat ran to meet the party, which had now turned the angle of the boulder. A spare, elderly, hard-handed, care-worn, and work-worn man, with a sunken cheek, and hair thin and gray, was approaching, with his arm in that of a young man, who might be seven or eight and twenty. Weary and a hungered for his absent son the old man had been for many tedious months; now, by the bright twilight, might be seen infinite joy and sweet peace on that wasted face; and in truth, the younger man looked like one who fed his father's lamp with the oil of gladness. The two boys were hanging on by his disengaged arm and hand, while little Nat, bounding toward him, tumbled head over heels, crushing poor Letty's flowers in the dust. There they were left, unseen by him for whose eye they had been nurtured in dews, and pampered with every ray of autumn sunshine. There, covered with dust, their beauteous life crushed out of them, lay the rich Malmaison, the delicate Vervain, the brilliant Salvia—the precious flowers, over which Letty had said a hundred times, as she shifted the pots that contained them from shade to sunshine, "If they will only bloom for his coming! But I know they will not—nothing ever does happen as I want it." Poor, prophetic Letty!

"Well, done! my little man," said the brother, picking the boy up, shaking the dust from his dress, wiping his cheek, and giving him a kiss. "Is this our little Nat? why the boy was hardly on his feet when I went away!"

The child looked up, for an instant daunted into silence by a certain air and tone of breeding foreign to his rustic home; but a Yankee boy is not long daunted by any thing, and he soon cried out, "Yes, I am Nat," and thrusting out one foot, "don't you see my boots?" The new-comer responded good-humoredly, while the father said, in an under tone, which did not escape his notice, "Poor boys! they don't get boots every day now!"

A buxom matron of forty, with long flaxen curls hanging over her blooming cheeks, and a rustic toilette, somewhat elaborated, advanced from the door-step to welcome the guest. There was no tenderness in the meeting, and no want of kindness. "How well you look!" she exclaimed, the word *well* covering a wide space. "I declare I should hardly know you, Mr. Lisle."

"Oh, no Mr. Lisle-ing me, pray. Call me Archibald—Archy—any of the old familiar household names—there is home in the sound of them. But where is Letty?"

"Letty! Letty!" screamed the boys in chorus; "Letty, brother 's come!" Letty appeared at the top of the stairs, which, as in most rustic houses in New England, fronted the outer door, and were near it. She rather slid, than ran down, and was stretching her hand to Archibald, when he caught her in his arms and kissed her, as he had kissed his little brothers. "Your hand, indeed! Letty," he cried; "is that the way you meet me, after I have been away so long?"

"Why, what ails you, Letty, my own Letty?" asked little Nat, looking up in her face tenderly, "there's tears on your cheek!"

"Tears of joy, then," said Letty, blushing hot enough to dry them away.

"Oh, I know now what you are crying for," said Nat, with a child's inconvenient persistance, "'cause of the flowers! I am so sorry—I tumbled down, and lost them in the dust."

"Oh hush, Nat, never mind," said Letty, eager to prevent the allusion to her flowers being heard by him for whom they were destined; but there was no danger of this. The young man's attention was arrested; he was eagerly looking around upon those material things that identify home, and which had lived in his memory. A shade passed

over his brow. He was pained, as we are with wrinkles and time-stains on faces that we love. His father's wife was a notable dame, and the house was clean and orderly; but there was a general worn-out look, as if every thing was used-up—a faded threadbare carpet, discolored paint, a soiled paper, general indications of a want of means to produce the national aspect of thrift and tidiness. The shadow on the son's face was answered by a sigh from the father; but his affection shone out, and cleared the atmosphere. "Come, my dear boy," he said, "sit down to supper. Come, mother," and looking complacently round upon the plentiful viands, "I declare! you have done your best. Sit here, Archy, in your old place, between me and Letty."

"No, it's my old place!" cried Nat, seizing Archibald's chair.

"Little sinner! but take it—take it. The other side is next to father, too—just as good, Nat."

"No, but it is not, though—t'other side is not next to Letty, too." Letty smiled on her little champion. Archibald was adjusting his seat, and did not mark him. Words enter some ears but words, and into others as leaden weights sinking deep in the heart.

It was a noisy meal. The boys detailed their last winter feats on the ice, and their summer sports, beginning and ending with, "Oh, Archy, how we did wish you were here!" The father edged in a few items of political news, and the voluble matron beginning each sentence with a "Hush, boys, as if your brother would care for such nonsense," retailed the miscellaneous country gossip—how "old Mrs. Tibbits had died, after every body was worn out watching with her; and how old Sally Ford had married at last, some said because she wanted to have *Mrs.* put on her tomb-stone; but Sally herself said, it was because she observed pious people always prayed for widows, and never for old maids! And

how their young minister had left them for another parish, and some folks said Letty best knew why! (Letty's disclaimer did not arrest the flood-tide.) How the anti-slavery fair had prospered, and the women's-rights convention rather failed; how Adeline Clapp's brother had come home from China, rich as Crœsus; how the old gentleman's fortune had turned out beyond account—the old place having sold for double what it was rated at—and some folks thought Adeline would heir her Uncle Medad's property; how every thing the Clapps touched seemed to turn to gold, but how, in spite of it all, Adeline was as friendly as ever, and had lately sent a letter to inquire when Archibald was expected."

All things have an end, and so this temporal destiny brought a conclusion to the good woman's communication. The meal ended, she retired to her household duties, and as soon as she had withdrawn, the gently flowing fountains of sweet family love that had been overpowered by her torrent were fully enjoyed. The evening was getting late when she returned, and addressing her husband, in the usual rustic mode, said, "Father, you look tired, not over well; I guess we'll omit prayers to-night."

"Not to-night! not to-night of all the nights in the year. I could not sleep without it. I feel unusually—but it's far from unpleasant," added the old man, with a pensive smile. "Let the boys stay up, mother—don't send little Nat to bed. Here, Archy, at my right hand, you are my right hand—and," he added, lowering his voice, "it will not be long before you take my place to these young ones; the thought gives me great pleasure." It is well and fitting, when a son's life pours a full tide into the dried channels of a father's.

"Let us pray," said the old man, with a solemn, tender earnestness, which indicated that prayer was to him an irre-

pressible desire—no studying of phrases, no preconsidering of words. He began with an ascription of praise from David's Psalms, that mould into which the devout spirit so naturally runs. He then proceeded in what has been somewhat flippantly called the "narrative style," the spontaneous expression of a simple, truthful heart communing with a Being, of whom it comprehends His providential oversight, His infinite love, and His tender sympathy.

Affection had daguerreotyped on the old man's memory the circumstances of his son's life. He now noted them with the minuteness of a scrupulous accountant. "It pleased thee, O Lord," he said, "to remove from me my first companion—exceedingly pleasant she was unto me. Among all the daughters of thy people, there was none like unto her for wisdom to rule her household. Early didst Thou ripen her for Thy kingdom, and when, with her departure, Thy servant's sun set, Thou didst leave one lesser light in his firmament, ever waxing stronger and stronger. Surely he was, as it were, the first-born, the beginning of strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. And now, O Lord! in view of past mercies, thy servant offereth unto Thee here, at his hearth-stone, his altar, as it were, his thank-offering. Thou hast been an ever-present help to his heart's-child. Thou didst save him in the sicknesses of childhood, that, like ravening wolves, devour the younglings of the flock. Thou didst preserve him in the slippery paths of childhood. Thou didst lead him 'through the wilderness' of boys; and when the temptations of youth beset him, though he was of a mirthful turn, though he loved sport, and mixed in dances to the sound of the timbrel and the harp, yet didst Thou keep his feet from sliding, and his heart from a snare! And, O Lord, Thou didst bless the labors of thy now aged and decaying servant, so that the lad himself being a fellow-worker thereto, was carried through the heavy outlay

of a college course; and there obtained knowledge, and walked uprightly, so that the elders spake well of him, and his companions loved him; and thou didst open a door for him in the thronged city, so that he had honorable place among those that expound the law, and right men's wrongs; and when, failing health and so forth made it seem, as it were, wise for him so to do, Thou didst open up a way for him to visit far countries, and there thou wert graciously with him, so that he did not go up and down, and to and fro, following after singing men, and dancing women, but diligently sought after knowledge; and now, in Thine own good time, Thou hast brought him back to his father's house, as it were, not the prodigal son who has wasted health and substance with riotous livers, but pure in heart, and with a ruddy countenance, through which the inner life shineth. Thy servant (the old man's voice trembled) hath no fatted calf to bring forth—naught, but the salutation, 'well done, good and faithful child.'" Suddenly the voice which had grown clearer and stronger as it proceeded in its devout testimony, failed. The old man seemed clearing his throat, and the family group, expecting him to resume his prayer, remained quiet in their positions, all, except the petted little Benjamin, Nat, who, patting the old man on the arm, whispered, "Go ahead, father, go ahead," and the father, as if answering, resumed, but indistinctly and falteringly, "The youngling, may he—the elder carry the youngling—my little boy in his bosom—and comfort—and—protect—the use—useful—prof—profit—able companion of—his—my—later—days—" Archibald was startled by this unusual stammering. He looked at the old man. The unmistakable paleness of death was on his face. Archibald sprang toward him just in time to receive him, as his head subsided backward. Letty knelt down beside Archy, her hands clasped in instinctive awe at the visitation of the solemn angel, whose

presence was now certain. Archibald's step-mother despatched her frightened boys for the doctor and the neighbors; and she brought out the common appliances for such exigencies. Archibald put them all aside, with a "hush, ma'am, it is useless." Once the old man rallied, and his bodily and mental eye recognized life's dearest, as the setting sun touches the highest, objects. He gazed on Archy with a smile more of heaven than earth, and said in a tone, just audible, "Your mother—my dear son—is waiting for me;" and then comprehending in a slow turn of his eye the group around him, he said, "Archy—the widow and the fatherless—I leave them poor—take care of them—my good son."

"I will, dear father, so help me God."

"And Letty, Archy—she has been so kind! Some day—perhaps—you and Letty—" His voice faltered. He groped about with his feeble hand, and took Letty's, and attempted again to speak, but his utterance was gone, and the wish welling up from the very depths of his heart was paralyzed by the inexorable hand that was upon him.

"What did he say?" asked Letty, whose ear had not caught the last feebly uttered words.

"Never mind now, dear Letty. Lift his feet, we will lay him on the bed." And as these young people reverently moved him into the adjoining bedroom, the good man's spirit returned to Him who gave it.

CHAPTER XII.

"Every day in thy life is a leaf in thy history."

The moon that had lit the last nights of Archibald's homeward voyage, shone on him and Letty, as they sat on the porch of his father's house, on the evening after his funeral.

"I was struck with the change in my father, when first I saw him," said Archibald. "Not only had he aged in my absence, but he looked ill to me. His hair had hardly begun to gray, when I went away, and now it is white. You never, one of you, wrote me that he was ill, Letty."

"Well, Archy, he never was what one might call ill. He never laid by a day, when he could get work."

"Get work! Surely my father has carried on his business as usual?"

"Well, no; but he forbade us each time we wrote giving you a hint of the change."

"What change? What change do you mean? Do explain Letty."

"Well, the kind of work he did, is now mostly done by machinery; not half his time was employed to profit, and when he was idle, he worried. He never spoke sternly to me, but once, and that was when I begged him to let me write to you how things were going. 'No,' he said, 'don't do it—don't think of it, you will displease me if you do. Letty don't do it. Let poor Archy lay up what health and

strength he can, he will need it all; we can all work a little harder, and live a little poorer, and bring it round at last.' But, Archy, he was discouraged, and he grew weaker every month; I could see it, though aunt never would allow it. You know she is so strong, and so hopeful."

"She has nothing of your delicate perception, Letty."

"She has something far better, Archy; she is always doing while I am only feeling."

"Doing!—yes—Heaven help us."

"Don't speak so—don't feel so, Archy; it is not right."

"But you are right, dear little girl, all right, and I beg your pardon a thousand times. I should have remembered that she is your aunt, and only my step-mother. Letty, dear, she should have left us one week of peace; but such a flutter of work! such a calling in of gossiping neighbors to fit out the household in mourning-weeds for my father's funeral, even consulting me about cutting down his sacred garments for the poor little boys. What did it matter, Letty? our hearts are sad-colored enough."

"Well, it's her way, Archy, she is made so, and it has turned to good account. Many an evening, when you were gone, when your father would shut up his book because he was too dejected to read it—and you know how he used to love to read, and teach the children, and never could get time enough—he would sit and look in our poor fire, and sigh, and sigh, and aunt did not seem to hear him, but would sit cheerily at her sewing, earning money, making garments for the neighbors, or saving it, patching the boys' clothes, always finding something to say, while I, a poor coward, young, and well, and yet, Archy, not able to face life, would go and cry myself to sleep, thinking of dear uncle's pale face—and—" Letty paused, and stammered the rest, as if it were a confession, "and of how you would feel, Archy, if you knew all."

"You are '*made so*,' dear Letty," said Archibald, and taking her hand, and pressing it to his lips, he added, "and I thank God for it."

Letty drew away her hand. "I do not, Archy," she said, "and you ought not to—I do not mean that exactly; but if I am weak by nature, I should resist that weakness."

"No, no, Letty, it is your charm, it is loveable, this weakness, as you call it, and I would not have it changed for all the steel armor of this working-day world." So, young men, the most sensible of them, talk to young women, and they believe them for the most part, and drift down the current. Letty did not, but the words were too sweet from Archibald to be gainsayed, and she let them pass.

"Indeed, Archy," she said, after a little pause, "you ought to know all the exertion aunt has made. You must respect her, though she is not quite to your taste."

"God forbid I should be unjust to her, Letty; I know she is a very good woman, though certainly, as you say, not quite to my taste. Could not you, Letty, ask her not to wear those long flaxen curls?"

"Archy!" Letty, for the first time smiled, but looked graver as she proceeded. "Aunt paid for all our wood, and many other things last winter, with the proceeds of our little school."

"*Our* little school! Then you are not always indulging your natural 'weakness,' Letty?"

"Well, Archy, I could not fold my hands, and sit still; of course I could not eat the children's bread. I had no right here, you know, Archy."

"*You*, no right! you who have been the one blessed compensating boon in my father's second marriage. Your right in our home stands as firm as its roof-tree, Letty."

Tears that an angel, secure in happiness, might have envied,

suffused Letty's soft brown eyes as she turned them gratefully on Archibald; "You must not think I am boasting, Archy, though you tempt me to it. I did keep the school chiefly, but poor aunt was left to do all the hard work of the house, for she has kept no help for the last year."

"All the work! the hard work, the washing, and that sort of thing?"

"Aunt has done it and never once murmured."

"She *is* a good woman. Letty, you are right, and I am very, very wrong."

"It worried your poor father more than it did aunt. He blamed himself for having married a second time, and brought such a burden on her. Aunt's only fault was talking too much about home affairs; but that, you know, was her way, she could not help it."

"She was *made so*."

"Stop, Archy! the thing that most worried your father, was the way she got Albert into the West Point Academy."

"How was that? I never understood that matter My father wrote to me that he had get the place, and I, but too glad to hear it, waited till I should get home for the explanation. Do you know how it was, Letty?"

Lettie smiled and shook her head. "Oh, dear, yes," she said; "we had trouble enough about it. You know each State has a right to a certain number of appointments; and when Mr. Medad Clapp was elected to Congress, aunt wrote—to—to Miss—"

"Not to Adeline Clapp!"

"Yes, Archy."

"How could she? Did my father know it?"

"Well, not till it was all settled. She said uncle was so squeamish, and the only way was to go right ahead, and tell him afterward."

"Why in the name of heaven, did not you speak, Letty?

Surely your instincts must have told you how I should revolt from an obligation to Adeline Clapp and her vulgar people."

"What could I have said to influence aunt? You know she thinks I have no energy."

"Energy! so—she drove on her *team?*"

"Oh, Archy! she did what she thought right and best."

"What did she do? tell me—heaven deliver me from such eternal doers!"

"Well—she wrote to Miss Adeline and reminded her of your intimacy with her brother, your classmate."

"Intimacy! go on, Letty."

"Well, she explained how it was that you were traveling, that you did not draw on your father, etc., but were using your own earnings, etc., and she told her why it had become necessary to get aid, if possible, to educate her boys so that they should not fall below their elder brother."

"You need not tell me any more, Letty. And so it was the appointment was got for Albert. Miss Adeline pulled the bell, and Uncle Medad answered it!"

"Well, Archy, she was very kind after her fashion. She wrote directly to aunt, and said she would leave no stone unturned to get the appointment. She would go on to Washington herself, she said, and intercede with the members, and she did."

"Oh, heavens, worse and worse!"

"Well; much, as you seem to dislike her, she feels very much interested in you."

"The devil take her interest! but go on, dear child, forgive me; let me know the whole of it, and make an end on't; tell me all she said; I'll screw my courage to the sticking-point and hear it."

"Well, if I must tell you all—I had rather not, Archy!"

"Yes, all—all—let me hear it all."

"Well, she wrote two sheets from Washington, all crossed, telling us the names of the members she spoke to, and how she got introduced to them, and how there were two, one quite a young man for a member, and the other a widower, not more than forty, that made her proposals of marriage, and how she kept them in the dark, till she had gained her object—how Uncle Medad laughed and said, Adeline knew when to blow hot and when to blow cold, and they would never see the color of her money—and so forth."

"Just as deep dyed in vulgarity as ever—dyed in the wool."

"Then there was a long parenthesis in Miss Adeline's letter which I read over and over, Archy. I believe I can recall it word for word." There was a smile of unwonted archness on Letty's lips, as she proceeded to the citation:

"I am peculiar in my ideas; I will never marry any one, even if he were President of the United States, who is after my fortune. To be sure I like genteel men—Uncle Mede says that is my weakness—but to all others I prefer a self-made man; my father was a self-made man."

"Yes!" interrupted Lisle, "and ill-made enough; but go on, Letty."

"I don't mean to marry a southerner, to waste what father earned. I don't want any of your Virginia FF's. No, give me a Bay State man, with no ancestors. It would not be an obstacle if his father was a mechanic."

Letty paused. Lisle bit his nails vehemently, and then rather ejaculated than said, "What did your aunt say to that, Letty?"

Letty seemed amused at his vexation, and smiling, replied in a low voice, that should have soothed a hotter irritation than Archibald's,

"Well, Archy, aunt said she thought it was an advertisement for you."

"Heaven grant she made no answer to the letter "

"Well, Archy, no—none—except—"

"Except! except what?"

"Well, aunt had to write—just to thank her for her present."

"A present! and accepted? what was it?"

"Just a check for one hundred dollars, for Albert's outfit."

"Why did she not return it, why did not *you* burn it, Letty?"

"Archy!"

"You might at least have remonstrated. The vulgarity of taking it was only exceeded by the vulgarity of giving it. My father did not know it? Surely my father did not know it?"

"No; aunt did not feel to tell him."

"I thought so. My father had an intuitive refinement—an instinctive perception that would have made him fly to his own covert from a shower of Clapp gold. There was not a drop of vulgarity in all the blood that filled his veins—mechanic though he was."

"It is getting chilly," said Letty, rising; "good-night, Archy!"

"Good-night—good-night, my dear Letty!"

Letty could scarcely get to her own room, shut the door, and bury her face in the pillow, before tears and sobs came. "Oh!" thought she, "how Archy has forgotten! He might remember that we always used to feel alike. He might just know I should feel as he does about that hateful Miss Clapp!

Remonstrate with aunt? He knows aunt always follows her own judgment. No—I see how it is—he just mixes me up with her—knows we are of the same blood, and thinks, as he says of Miss Clapp, that I, too, am 'dyed vulgar in the wool.' Well, I knew it was a dream! such a dream! I knew I must wake from it—but Archy should not have waked me so roughly." Poor Letty! she had built a tower of hope upon a foundation of precious memories, and at the first light touch the fragile structure had fallen, and left the memories but a ruin to weep over.

Letty had come into her aunt's family when Archibald was a college lad, and she a little child. Lisle had the frank and kindly nature that instinctively opens its heart to a child. He treated Letty lovingly, and she attached herself fondly to him. She was the constant companion of his holidays at home. He had the true New England taste and habit which blends use with enjoyment, and he brought to his vacation days study as well as play for Letty. He supplied to her the deficiencies of the district school. He read with her, and taught her mathematics and the rudiments of Latin and French thoroughly. The secret of the rapid progress that surprised him, was in her heart, not her brain. The hard work she achieved, depended on springs that one touch alone could set in motion. While she was yet a little girl, she did his bidding as eagerly and as deftly as did the gentle Ariel Prospero's; and Archibald, invested with that mystic power, which is as absolute over woman, as was "staff and book" of Prospero over the island spirits, trained, and teased, and fondled her by turns. In time, as the plaything became the companion, Letty was not less intimately associated with his cheerful home holidays, when he was relieved from the harness, whip, and spur of his professional life. When he came home he was sure to find his room daintily arranged by her delicate hand. He was an ardent sports-

man in his vacation days, and she had learned from the wood-craftsmen of the neighborhood, the best fishing-ground for the season, and the surest covers of the woodcock. Her faculties and senses were sharpened to one service. On his part, from a kind and lavish heart, he rained happiness upon her. His pleasures were incomplete without his "little girl," as he continued to call her, after she had grown to the medium height of womanhood, and had the tremulous susceptibility that belongs to the age of unbounded hope, and narrow experience. Every affectionate tone, every spontaneous kindness, forgotten by him as soon as uttered or bestowed, were treasured in her "heart's memory," pondered on, and in many a solitary walk and pensive twilight, read into fond prophecies.

Was Archibald Lisle culpable in this? Oh no! he was, like other men, careless, thoughtless! He was like other honest, honorable men, who would not, for the world, authorize an expectation in their fellow man, and not satisfy it to the letter; and yet, by look, by word, by deed, they excite the susceptible, imaginative nature of woman, enlarge her horizon, extend her perspective, fill her firmament with sun, moon, and stars, and her earth with all glorious things, and then perhaps, surprised at the wrong they have done, the *mistake* they have made—perhaps unconscious of it—they go off to their career, be it what it may, and leave her in a dreary world, the lights gone, the colors faded, a vacant waste before her; and she—she bides the law of her condition. If she be of those highest natures that love once, and but once—if she become not saint or martyr, if she have not power to make an independent life, she subsides into the patient drudge of some household, and spins the silk that others wear; or, if of a lower nature, she becomes the colporteur of the town, or the gossip of the village!

The following is the end of a letter written by Archibald

Lisle, on the eve of his departure from the paternal roof:

"Pardon, my dear Mrs. Clifford, my blotted pages. I have been raining tears over this detail to you of my brief meeting with my father. God only knows how I loved him in life—how I honor him in death! Had I known his condition, I should have come home six months ago. I shall forever regret a gain to myself, at the expense of a loss to him. My step-mother, whose valuable qualities I do full justice to (when I do not come in contact with her), will maintain her housekeeping, and take three or four boarders, and so, 'by hook or by crook,' they will live comfortably. I, by means of my own hard work and God's blessing, will start the boys in life, and thus acknowledge a debt to my dear father, which I can never fully pay. Letty is a little jewel, or rather, she is worth all the jewels in a king's crown, being more for use than decoration. Her cheerfulness is obscured just now, of course, for she dearly loved my father; but her pale cheek is, I think, but the livery of the country, which strikes me in painful contrast with the Hebe coloring in England. The dirge-like tone of her voice, too, is but the national note, not so much the voice of sadness as of 'sickness.' 'Every village has its song,' says Carlisle; I wish ours were a livelier one.

"Pray do not suffer Alice to get this tone and drawl, and the everlasting provincial 'well,' the initiatory word of every sentence Letty speaks. Strange, that custom should make us so insensible to these inelegances. Poor Letty! I am ashamed to have been annoyed by these trifles. She is well instructed—cultivated even—and essentially refined, and yet these little provincialisms, like an ill-assorted color in an otherwise well-dressed woman, spoil the effect—ruin the toilette.

"But Letty is a dear little girl, and already looks forward cheerfully to the career on which she is entering. I have determined to take her to New York, to live in the family of a worthy old German, a friend of mine; there she can have masters, and fit herself to be a governess. Some bright day she will be married; or, if she be not, she has too well-ordered a character to fall into the discontents and repulsions of old maidism.

"P.S. I am afraid that what I have written above about poor Letty, will remind you, as it does me, of your once saying that Miss G. H. had destroyed my taste for simplicity.

"And I am ashamed to have felt any dissatisfaction with my step-mother. That want of tact, which (shame to us!) is so annoying, is a mere defect of organization. This good woman was devoted to my father, and now concurs in my plans for the children so cheerfully, and takes up her part of the burden so courageously, that truly I admire her.

"Right your judgment of Miss H——, dear Mrs. Clifford. Her character is a complicated one—not artificial. It lacks not one of the qualities or graces that make the perfect woman!"

There is a chasm of more than four years between this letter and the preceding one to Mrs. Clifford. This chasm was filled by a faithful correspondence that, however interesting to the parties, is of no importance to our readers.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I slept and dreamed that life was beauty,
I waked and found that life was duty."

More than four years have glided away since Eleanor's marriage, and she is now a matron of six-and-twenty. She had experienced the transition, common in the happiest married relation, from adoration to friendship—passed from the tropics to the temperate zone, a passage that often chills conjugal happiness in its first blossoming. She had borne the perils and heavy responsibilities of maternity; and in addition to her share of the inevitable labor and annoyance from *Celtic* domestic service, she had satisfactorily responded to the demands on her time, strength, and sympathy from the multitudinous congregation of her husband. And yet the sweet serenity of Eleanor's brow was unruffled, the composure of her spirit undisturbed. And why was she not impatient, petulant, unreasonable, disappointed, like half the petted children of fortune? Because she accepted life as God's gift, and recognized, in all its details, the infinite love that floods it with enjoyments. Because she received life's tasks as her divine Master's appointment, and performed them with a cheerful filial spirit, a religious obedience and faith. A happy temperament may sustain one through a healthful and occupied youth, but nothing less than a religious spirit can meet the strain when cares, and toil, and change—that come to all—come. And certainly, nothing less can overcome the greater perils of ease, luxury, and in-

dulgence. If it be not so, why do we hear such a pestilent breathing of ennui and complaint from homes that should be *alive* and happy? Why do our most gifted and accomplished young women question life instead of using it, as if its harvests could be reaped without being sown? Why do so many married and unmarried women waste, and fret, and fritter away life, instead of seeing that each cross, trial, and blessing is a rung of that ladder which is set for them to mount to heaven! Let them pray and strive for the spirit that makes life duty, and duty life.

Eleanor had sustained all the ordinary trials of her position. She had now something harder to struggle with—something that would require all the strength of her well-preserved health, and all the equanimity of her cheerfully religious spirit.

In the midst of her husband's popular and satisfactory career, he was disturbed by secret misgivings on points of faith, which he had professed and promised to preach. He was too honest a man for compromises and shams, and his scrupulous investigations and over-work in every way—the malaria of our atmosphere—were beginning to tell on his health and temper.

The four years over which our history has leaped, had brought Grace to the ripe age (in our fine world) of twenty-two. Whether and how time had modified her character in these four years, she will best show. She entered her sister's nursery one bright morning, when Eleanor was repairing a vest of her husband's. Her eldest child, May, was sitting on a stool beside her, pricking her little finger with her first hemming. A boy, not yet two years old, was toddling about the room, watched, through his mischievous gyrations, by his busy mother; and an infant girl of six months was sleeping in the crib. Awakened by Grace's entrance, she opened her eyes, and stretched

her arms toward her. Grace caught her up, embraced her vehemently, waltzed around the room with her, calling her fond names, and then laying her down, she gazed at her with an expression half curious and half sad, and sighed.

"Nan gives you a smile for your sigh, Grace!" said the mother.

"Yes, poor child."

"Why, 'poor child?'"

"Why! ah, Eleanor! she only smiles because she does not see beyond the threshold of life—the life she will spend like most of us—not you, dear—'in drawing water in leaky vessels.' She is now in the freshness of Paradise, but she sees not the 'mournful Eden' beyond it, and she smiles, Eleanor. I sigh, seeing the rose tints of dawn changing to leaden hues, the clouds of disappointment and infinite tediousness gathering."

"But, dear Grace, life is like a picture. Its beauty depends on its lights and shadows, and those we can adjust for ourselves."

"Yes, for the picture, but not for life, Eleanor—not for life. Never reason from analogies, they always mislead."

"Then I appeal to primitive truths. God gives life, and therefore it must be a good."

"And so I have tried to look upon it and to be content with it. When you lived with us, Eleanor, I was happy—I was young then—the rose tints had not quite faded. And after you left us, for a year or two, life slid away. I filled it up with the precious stuff that Anne Carlton's life is made of; with dresses, and gayeties (so-called!) and 'beaux.' And when this bored me intolerably, I took yours and Frank's advice, my dear physicians, and sought occupation. I took to my music, and studying and reading German; and then, misled by flattery of a talent for art only a little more

than ordinary, I took to painting in oils. But after six months' work, and poor old Bossi's admiration growing from 'Bene, bene!' to 'Admirabile!' I saw a true Murillo, that holy family of Tallis'—how dare his wife look at it?—I kissed it—I knelt before it—and, as you know, Eleanor, I went home and ordered all my bedaubed canvas to the garret. After that, you coaxed me into your school for the German emigrants. I was interested for a while, but it was not my calling, and now I have subsided into the old rut with Mrs. Herbert and Anne, and am not a whit better, and not half so happy as they."

"But, dear Grace, you know as well as I that happiness is not got by running after it."

"Ah, good-morning, Frank!" exclaimed Grace, "I am glad you have come in; Eleanor was just beginning one of her lay sermons, which I particularly dislike, because they always end with leaving me in the wrong, convinced, but not cured; and what is the use of conviction without amendment? Pardon my disrespect to your profession, Frank, but speak honestly—is any one ever made better by preaching?"

"Certainly—my whole congregation." The slight smile that quivered on Esterly's lips vanished as he turned to his wife, and said petulantly, "Eleanor, do I own a pocket-handkerchief? There is not one in my drawer."

Eleanor went to her husband's dressing-room, returned, and giving him a handkerchief, said, with a smile, "There is a pile of at least a dozen there."

Esterly was absorbed in forcing a stud through a stiffly starched shirt-bosom, and did not look into Eleanor's face to see its unruffled sweetness, but thrust the handkerchief into his pocket, without the "thank you" a gentleman bestows on a maid-servant.

"I really wish, Eleanor, you would not forget to speak

to Bridget about doing up my shirts so abominably," he said.

"I have spoken to her, repeatedly."

"Then turn her away—it's intolerable."

He left the room with a nod to Grace, but turned back to say, "I am not sure I shall return to dinner. You may wait for me till five, Eleanor."

"Eleanor, dear sister, you are a saint!" exclaimed Grace; "I should detest a man, if he made me responsible for the order of his drawers, and the starching of his shirts."

Eleanor colored slightly, but not a muscle of her face was discomposed.

"What transformation is there," continued Grace, "in the old myths, half so horrible as that of a lover into a husband?" Just think of the devoted lover Frank was, four years ago; a handkerchief you had but touched, was sacred as a holy relic to him, and he would have sacrificed the whole Protestant Episcopal Church rather than have kept you waiting an hour for your dinner."

"Then, Grace, he has gained in rationality what I have lost in homage."

"Eleanor, don't affect to justify him. I would not have you an exacting wife, but I can not endure such utter self negation. I know very well what Frank is—an excellent husband in the main, very far better than most men; but that is only saying he is far better than most brutes."

"My dear Grace, you are in a worse humor than poor Frank, this morning, but still, I think it would do neither him, nor you, nor me good if I were to be vexed with him, or with your attack on my husband, and fly out upon you for it."

"You fly out! When lambs 'growl and fight,' and doves pick out vultures' eyes, then you will '*fly out.*' The truth is, Eleanor, you are too unresisting, almost impassive. When was there any thing gained in this world by inert sub-

mission? I do not like women publicly to champion *women's rights*. The Madame Georges, and our own prize-fighters in women's conventions have made the very phrase odious; but I would have every woman, in her own place, maintain her dignity, and not submit to those little domestic wrongs and tyrannies of your 'very good men,' which are vestiges of the dark ages."

"You would recommend a species of guerilla warfare, my dear, a fighting hand-to-hand in the seclusion and fastnesses of home."

"Fighting! no, but remonstrance—and—and resistance, if need be. Tell me, honestly, Eleanor, do you really think that your husband had any right to speak pettishly to you, because his pocket-handkerchiefs were not where his lordship expected to find them? to flout you, because your laundress happened to put rather too much starch in his shirts? or to make you wait an hour for your dinner, with more discourtesy than he would have used toward the keeper of a lodging-house? Now, answer me fairly, and not as a special pleader for Frank—come! I see your feelings are roused: there are those red spots on your white throat that always indicate that your well-spring of feeling, which lies deep, is stirred; but answer me fairly, Eleanor."

"I will, Grace."

"Yes, perfection, I know you will—proceed."

"The relation between husband and wife, like all the other relations of life, is imperfect, and more difficult than any other, because it brings our imperfect natures into the closest relation, complicated by complete community in some respects, and indestructible individuality in others."

"Pray, my darling," interrupted Grace, "do you indite Frank's sermons for him?"

"If I did, Grace, my next should be on patience, and you should be the 'awful example.'"

"You are heavenly, Eleanor—go on."

Eleanor proceeded, very much in earnest. "The nature of the relation must account for a vast deal of imperfection on both sides, and for some unpremeditated wrong on the part of the husband. There are little conjugal tyrannies that are relics of the stern domestic despotisms of past times, which even such a man as Frank, good, kind, generous as he is, and more loving than the lover, is unconsciously guilty of. If any thing goes wrong in the household, the husband frets at the wife, as we fret at the weather, without ever thinking, in either case, that injustice is done to the Providence that orders without and within. But the condition of women and wives is ameliorating. Honest and generous men are righting our great legal wrongs; and if our virtue improves with our condition, the time is not far distant when such a man as Frank will not—" Eleanor hesitated; she could not bear to finish a sentence to her husband's disadvantage.

"When he will not, like a cross horse, bite his mate whenever the harness galls," interposed Grace; "but go on, Eleanor."

"Frank is never deliberately unkind, or even inconsiderate, Grace."

"And you are never stung by his injustice—extempore? impulsive?—spontaneous?"

"That I did not pretend. Frank has the irritable temperament that belongs to a fervent character. He is often harassed in ways that you do not know, and over-worked, and not well; and I, who best know the causes of his little irritations, am best able to bear them. If I were to remonstrate, and expostulate, and stand upon my dignity—most uncomfortable ground to stand upon—or if I were to sulk, or to weep, these transient dissatisfactions would ripen into disgust, and then where would our love be?—the treasure—the life of our lives! You know, dear Grace, there is a

law of nature, by which running streams, if not disturbed by external forces, deposit their impurities, and so I think our affections by this divine law will become purer and purer, till the mortal stream passes, in crystal clearness, into the ocean of eternal love."

"Happily symbolized, Eleanor. And so, if I understand you, your patience, and forbearance, and love, is, in the life-long course of the conjugal stream, to perfect Frank's purification?"

"I certainly did not mean, Grace, to make any such pharisaical pretension. If I am patient with his foibles, he is very forbearing with my faults. These trifling interruptions of our tranquillity pass like the summer breeze over the grain-field—the crop is the stronger, the harvest is the richer for them. If you will stay and dine with us to-day, you will see that neither Frank nor I remember that he was ruffled this morning."

"Oh! no doubt his feathers are smoothed down by exercise in the open air, and—perhaps—a little parochial flattery. Your's need no smoothing down, Eleanor, for they are never ruffled."

"My temper is less perturbable than Frank's: no merit of mine, for I have better health, and fewer annoyances. But, Grace, I have faults quite as serious as his, and far more annoying to him than his are to me."

"In what undiscovered region do they lie, my dear?"

Eleanor was about to reply, when the tête-à-tête was interrupted by a quick step on the stair, and a recognizing exclamation from little May of, "There's papa again!" and Esterly entered, his face radiant with pleasure. "Eleanor," he said, "Archibald Lisle has arrived! I met him coming to see us—looking so well, and so handsome. He has promised to dine with us to-morrow. You must come too, Grace; and ask Uncle Walter."

"Certainly I will come, and you may be sure of Uncle Walter—Mr. Lisle was such a favorite with him; and I like a fresh traveler, before he subsides into the dullness of business life."

"And, if I remember, Grace, you liked him before he was a traveler?"

"Yes, I think I should have liked him better if he had given me the opportunity; but like most of our clever young men, he kept aloof from society—so called. Is he at all changed?"

"No, except in an appearance of health. He looks as vigorous as an Englishman; and, perhaps there is now something of the air of a traveled man—a man of the world—and less—"

"The air of a rustic?" said Grace.

"No, he never had that; less the air of a hard-working lawyer."

"We will not quarrel about terms, Frank. I remember it distinctly—Horace Copley called it 'the stoop legal.'"

"Horace Copley! I wish his 'inner man' were as erect as Lisle's."

"Do not be quite so professional in your slurs, Mr. Frank," said Grace. The eyes of both husband and wife glanced at Grace, and then met. Grace colored slightly, while she said carelessly, "I suppose travel has had its usual effect in polishing your friend?"

"I can not say. To me, he is the identical 'Archy' of our old, cordial days; the same light in his face, the same warmth in his heart. The color of his coat is changed; poor fellow! he has lost his excellent old father. But truly, Grace, I did not look at the tie of his neckcloth, nor am I quite sure whether a moustache adorn his face or not—neither could make, or much mar him."

"A concession, brother Frank, from one whose priestly

office forbids all such adornments. But where has your friend been, what sphere illuminated, since he left us?"

"He has been through a course of lectures on the civil law at a German university, and in the mean while delving in the German language and German literature—thus occupying the first six months, and the last nine he has been running over Italy, Greece, Egypt, and Palestine."

"Bless me! I thought he was a poor young lawyer, forced abroad to recover his health."

"So he was. Not absolutely poor, either. He had two or three thousand dollars to spare, and chose to invest them in health and accomplishments, which could be had abroad at a cheaper rate than at home."

Grace sighed. Possibly she thought of men's different tastes in investments, for, the preceding evening she had heard a snobbish friend of Horace Copley enumerating, with a tailor's precision, the costly articles of his luxurious wardrobe, and conclude with a sum total of $2,000 for annual investments in coats, vests, etc. "Pray, Frank," continued Grace, pursuing their subject, "can a man, just well started in his profession, lay it down and resume it at pleasure?"

"No—certainly not in New York, where an individual is not missed much longer than a particular wave from the ocean."

"He can hardly expect," said the considerate Eleanor, "another piece of good fortune, like that of his partnership with our old Counselor Jones."

"Perhaps not," replied her husband, "but it was by his merit he attained that good fortune, and in due time his merit will set him on his feet again. He depends on no accident of patronage. With his experience, accomplishments, laboriousness—and necessities, he can not fail."

"Necessities, Frank?"

"Yes, his father has left a young family to be taken care of; so, as he says, he must to work at once."

"Yes, work—work—work!" echoed Grace, "the demon that haunts the American mind. All are alike ridden by this 'man of the sea.' Work for money—for fame—for duty. Truly we work out the primeval curse. We are all task-work workers!"

"With a few notable exceptions," said Esterly; "Copley, par exemple."

"Yes, Mr. Esterly, Horace Copley is an exception. He is a man of elegant tastes, elegant manners, and elegant 'idlesse.'"

"And very elegant fortune, my dear sister, to the right expenditure of which, if he continues favored by your approbation, I trust he will sacrifice his elegant idlesse."

Grace threw on her cloak, and was abruptly bidding "good-morning," when little May called out, "Come back, my Grace, and kiss me!" Grace turned to embrace the child, but she held her at arm's-length, and looking at her with an expression of detective truth, the Ithuriel spear that children come armed into the world with, she said, "You are not good this morning, Grace—you are not *my* Grace!" Grace made no reply, but as she went down the stairs, she wiped away hot tears that sprang from a consciousness responding to the child.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Be thy dinner simple and sufficient,
And let thy guests be thy sauces and spices."

Grace Herbert was in a false position in our American Paris. Happy those who find their right one anywhere! A creature of her rare gifts was about as well adapted to the fashionable world of New York, as a first-rate ship would be to the artificial lake of a pleasure-ground. In other civilized countries, where there is a privileged class sustained by transmitted rank, individuality of character is fearlessly exhibited in high life, and talent is variously cultivated and developed in the brilliant accomplishments that enamel its society. Time-hallowed names and new-made honor playing a part in the same scene, produce dramatic effects; and boldness in vice, and picturesque eccentricities sustain the interest, at least while youth lasts.

But with us whatever is noblest and most effective in character is, for the most part, strained out of this life. Who hopes to meet our poets, our artists, and our historians at the "most brilliant party of the season," or but by some rare chance, to see there an heroic Arctic adventurer, an eloquent advocate, or a renowned statesman; or, far below them, on the scale, the ripe men and women who constitute the intellectual capital of the country? No, our society is characterized by the monotony and infinite tediousness of mediocrity, by a vulgar and childish struggle for the

most insipid of all celebrities, a celebrity for fine dress, 'palatial' houses, costly furniture, showy equipage, and surpassing expense in entertainments. The inevitable consequence is that our drawing-rooms are not, we believe, quite the vulgar arenas they have been described, but they are for the most part abandoned to boys and girls, whose keen appetite for pleasure has not been dulled by even one campaign experience; and a woman of two-and-twenty, like Grace Herbert, if not occupied by an engrossing affection, is in this fine world—if we may risk the ungracefulness of the comparison—much like a locomotive off the track. If she had been absolutely poor and friendless, she would have found a safety-valve in employment. "The ashes of her own fire would *not* have choked her soul." If her destiny had been cast in the country, its unmasked life and healthy simplicity would have tended to a serene existence. She might, it is true, have made her own life, but as yet she had yielded to the intensity of her nature, not controlled it. Such intensity is like fire: if the best servant, the cruelest master.

At this crisis of her life, she was in danger of resigning the control of this element to another in whose hands it would be sure to become a destructive agent. At Eleanor's house, she escaped from the ordinary insipidity of the winter's routine. She anticipated the dinner-hour on the following day, and ran up to the nursery for a romp with the children, while her Uncle Walter went to the library. The library and drawing-room were one in Eleanor's limited household. Little May sprang into her arms with a clamorous welcome. "Oh, Grace!" she said, "my own Grace, today! Where did you get that red rose in your hair?"

"And what if I don't tell you, May?"

"Then I shall guess."

"No, no! no guessing, May; take this bouquet to your

mother—tell her it is sent by our kind step-mamma—and here is a tiny rose-bud for you from my own bouquet."

"Oh, thank you; but Grace, why do you always call grandmother 'step-mamma' and 'step-mother?' Mamma never does."

"Do as your mamma does, my dear, and ask me no questions."

"Ask no questions and guess no guesses; but I shall, though!" pursued the child, with arch pertinacity, perceiving by a sort of mischievous intuition that she teased her aunt. "The red rose and, I guess, the bouquet too, came from—"

Grace put her hand over the child's lips, and while she laughed and struggled, Eleanor said, "Wherever it came from, Grace, it becomes you; but it is a camelia, May—a Japan rose."

"So it is; and Mr. Copley said—have not I guessed, Grace?—Mr. Copley said, mamma, that red camelias were created for Aunt Grace's hair."

Eleanor looked at Grace as if to verify Mr. Copley's opinion. Her eye met her sister's, and Grace's eye fell. Children are quick interpreters. May put her chubby little arms around her aunt's neck caressingly, and said, "Now don't be angry with me, Grace."

"Angry, May! What on earth makes you think I am angry?"

"Why you don't look as you did when Mr. Copley said that—then you smiled all the time."

"Take care! you little spy," said her mother, "or your Aunt Grace won't let you stay with her, when Mr. Copley is there."

"Then I shall hate him, for he is always there," replied the child.

"In that case, my dear, yours will be a united family," said Grace.

"Don't chastise the parents over the child, Grace," said Eleanor; "depend on it, we shall never hate whom you can love."

Little May was perplexed, but snatching at a meaning, she said, "Do you love Mr. Horace Copley, Grace?"

"I love you, May." The child knowing but one quality of love, was quite satisfied that she outrivaled Copley, and Grace prevented further queries by asking her sister if she expected any other guest than Mr. Lisle?

"Yes; Miss Adeline Clapp."

"What! that intrusive, vulgar young woman from *Clapville?* Why did you ask her?"

"Simply because I could not help it." Eleanor did not understand the severe purport of her words. She "could not help it;" Miss Clapp had accidentally learned the preceding evening that Archibald Lisle was to dine with Mr. Esterly—she resolved to be of the party, and her resolve was destiny. "She called here this morning," continued Eleanor; "I found her in the library, the folding-doors open, and Bridget arranging for dinner. I told her, by way of apology, that I had given orders to Bridget to say that I was engaged. 'The girl told me so,' she replied, 'but I knew you would not mind me—I never make myself a stranger.' Then, after asking me a cluster of questions, and ascertaining who was coming to dine with me, she professed an old intimacy with Mr. Lisle, and concluded by saying, 'I have a great mind to dine with you, too, to-day—voluntarily—that is what Uncle Medad calls being hospitable.' You see, Grace, I could not help myself."

"I see you did not; if people are ignorant of conventional rules, and have no instincts, you should harden your heart in self-defense, Eleanor. You have spoiled our dinner. If we were a large party, this savage would not harm it, but a bad flavor in a simple dish ruins it. Uncle Walter, whose very

soul it grieves to decline a good dinner, will not accept an invitation till he has a bill of fare of the company. He dreads to meet those who will either bore him, or not understand him. The other day, at a dinner company at home—our step-mother is rather remarkable, you know, for ill-assorting her guests—that old pedant Price quoted a long, irrelevant passage from Dryden. 'Dryden! Dryden! who is Dryden?' exclaimed Uncle Walter. Afterward, in the drawing-room, Mrs. Hall said, 'How very odd, your Uncle Walter never heard of Dryden! why, dear, he is the glorious John, so often spoken of in the "Pirate!"'"

"Did you set her right, Grace?"

"I? No—that would have suited your milk of human kindness; I merely shrugged my shoulders, and said, 'Is he?' and was no doubt put in the category of ignorance with my Uncle Walter. No, Eleanor; you may as well have guests speaking different languages, as with such wide disparities as there are between Miss Adeline Clapp and Archibald Lisle!"

When the sisters came down to the library, Uncle Walter kissed Eleanor, as was his custom, and surveying her with satisfaction said, "By George, Nelly, you are the best dressed" (*en passant*, Eleanor's dress always harmonized, like the colors of a flower) "best little model woman, wife, and mother in the United States."

"Happiest, Uncle Walter—say happiest, and leave out your other epithets."

"No, my child; but add that, it fits with the rest. One may be good without being happy, but never happy without being good—and that aphorism is as old as Seneca." He then murmured, in a low voice:

> "'Give me the pliant mind, whose gentle measure
> Complies, and suits with all estates.'"

He turned his eye to Grace. She smiled and nodded, accepting her sister's praise, and her own implied dispraise. "But, Eleanor," he continued, "where is May? You promised me my cotemporaries!"

Eleanor explained that May had been sent away to give place to an unexpected guest.

"Then, Nelly," he said, "I am to be the only child in the company?"

"Yes, Uncle Walter," rejoined Grace, patting his bushy gray head; "the only boy, and welcomed and loved because you are a boy, and always will be!"

The flow of family satisfactions was suspended by Archibald Lisle's entrance, his face beaming with the yet fresh joy of his recent return. He was merely bowing to Grace, when she cordially extended her hand. His face lighted with a flush of surprise, which had not subsided when Miss Adeline Clapp entered, producing a Gorgon influence on the general vivacity, and almost paralyzing Lisle. She rustled in, overdressed for the occasion in an over-flounced and overtrimmed plaided silk of all colors, with flame-colored ribbons in her hair, which harmonized with nothing but the perennial color of her cheek. As Miss Clapp is a real person, we are bound to exhibit her as she is daguerreotyped on our memory. She was as tall as any of the muses, and remarkably well made, but not in the least like the Graces, for an ever-present self-consciousness made her stiff as a lay figure. Her feet were small, and always *en scene*. Her hands were white, and emblazoned with rings, of more sparkle than value, for it was Miss Adeline's boast that she never made "unproductive investments." Her features were regular, except the nose, which was a tower of strength, long, high, and aquiline. For the rest she may be served in superlatives. Her skin was very white, so were her teeth. Her hair was very black and abundant, with a very unrelenting

cow-lick. Her identifying peculiarity, her "mark," was a deep, unvarying color. No variation of feeling deepened or paled it. Like Cæsar's wife, it was not to be suspected, for it suffused the nose, and dyed the angle of the chin—it was fierce!

Miss Adeline went through the prescribed greeting to the hostess, and then turning upon poor Archibald Lisle raked him, as a broad-side from a man-of-war might a defenceless yacht. His two years abroad had done pretty well for his natural shyness, but had not fortified him against such an attack. "How pleasant to meet you again, Archy," she said; "you know, Dates and I always used to call you 'Archy' —and to meet, too, when I least expected it!"—the relentless woman had been weeks plotting the meeting!—"and only two days after you got to the city!" Lisle blushed and stammered, said she was "very kind," and felt as if he could bite off his tongue for saying so; but when she proceeded to say, in a lowered and emphatic tone, giving to her communication the aspect of old intimacy, "Just eight years, last Thanksgiving, since we parted!" he became confused, half turned away, and overset a light Italian chair, which, as all Italian chairs do, broke. Esterly came to his relief, saying, "Go make your peace with my wife;" and then making good his intervention, he laughed at his friend's characteristic "bad luck." "Mr. Lisle was a great favorite of my poor mother," he said, "but she had rather a dread of the peril to lamps, inkstands, etc., when he came to see us—I am glad to find him unchanged."

"Unchanged! my! do you feel so? Well, to be sure I have not seen him for eight years, and then I saw him in—in peculiar circumstances," again Miss Adeline lowered her very nasal voice, and cast down her eyes mysteriously. Happily, any further communication was prevented by the announcement of dinner, and Esterly took good care to place

the young lady as far as possible from her victim. Miss Adeline was restive. "Well," she said, "if I felt about married gentlemen as most young ladies do, I should have a set-to, Mr. Esterly, with you for placing me so far from the only beau present. I hope he does not overhear," she continued, turning her eyes to Lisle, and taking advantage of the momentary silence preluding the onset of knives and forks, to make sure he did.

"Confound her," muttered Uncle Walter, in a tone so low, that Grace alone heard it, and she forgave it.

But the ill-sorting guest—the bad ingredient—did not, as Grace had predicted, spoil the dinner; the other materials were too strong and too flavorous to be so overpowered. The genial flow was now and then interrupted by a cross shot from Miss Clapp, who asked Lisle if he were not homesick when abroad. To which he most distinctly replied, "Never." And when she answered, "Well, that's a compliment to your friends at home," he rejoined, "I heard regularly from all the friends I cared to hear from," after which, she was miraculously silent for half an hour.

No man enjoyed a good dinner—the rite of social life always enjoyed by men of genial quality—more thoroughly than Uncle Walter; but when canvas-backs and delicate birds succeeded to the first course, he said, "Come, come, Nelly, this won't do; I called you my model woman, and you are giving in to the excesses of the town."

"Excesses, Uncle Walter," said Grace, "after your dinner yesterday in Fourteenth-street, where, you told me, each guest was rated at twenty-five dollars a head?"

"My dear Grace, do you think I bring our little transcendental woman's hospitalities into comparison with such a feeding and pricing fête as that?"

"Transcendental! Uncle Walter," said Eleanor. "Do you mean to satirize me?"

"No, my child. I keep my satire for Grace—who feels it. But do not you and Esterly maintain that the luxury of your table is to consist in your guests, and not in your viands? I don't clearly understand the meaning of your new-fangled words; but I supposed that was transcendental —(the bird is delicious!) Did not you invite your charming English friend to meet Bryant here, to dine with you upon a single joint of meat, and a simple pudding? Is not that spiritualizing, transcendentalizing hospitality? Give me another bit of the 'good creature,' Frank. This time Heaven has sent the cook, as well as the meat."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Adeline, "how odd it must seem to you, Mr. Lisle, just coming from Paris, to hear such an ado over a pair of canvas-backs!"

"Odd!" repeated Lisle, "a 'home-cut and come again' sirloin of beef is delicious to me, after frugally feeding at French *Restorateurs*, and Italian *Trattorias*."

"A sirloin of beef! yes, indeed," said Mr. Herbert, "even a beef-steak, cooked by our old Diana, is a dish for a king—a mouthful more, Frank—the goddess has roasted them to a turn—you don't know the goddess, Mr. Lisle. She was born in the last century, and reared, and taught by a past generation, in those golden days before the Celts came in. Heaven help you who have fallen upon the latter times of Irish cooks. The goddess would rather suffer the martyrdom of St. Lazarus, and be broiled on one of her own grid-irons, than to see her old 'misses'' daughters adopt the fashionable '*à las*.' I shy them too. I have a Jew's horror of unclean beasts. I like to eat the dear familiar creature I know (one mouthful more, Frank, and I have done); as you say, Mr. Lisle, an honest sirloin is good enough."

"*Lodare il mare e passare par la terra!*" said Grace.

"What's that, Grace? Sir Toby and I, you know, never followed the tongues."

"An Italian proverb you reminded me of, Uncle Walter. I will give you a free translation: "Praise the beef-steak, and feed on the canvas-backs."

Mr. Herbert finished the last of his "last morsels," and turning to Mrs. Esterly, said, "Now, honor-bright, Nelly, where did these ducks come from? They are the first of the season, and, therefore, alas! not for our money."

"They were sent to us by a friend in Baltimore."

"Ah, Lisle, there's the secret out of our not dining on a joint. Truly, 'a friend is the medicine of life.' But, Grace, none of your arch smiles at me. I am neither gourmand, nor epicure, you know."

"No, Uncle Walter, neither, but just genially on the verge of both!"

"Well! I am not transcendental."

There was a twinkle from Walter Herbert's eye, and a certain movement of his lips, which, contrasting with the massive strength and gravity of his countenance, gave an indescribable touch of humor to what he said. He excited laughter without indicating it. A smile went round the table at his disclaimer of transcendentalism. This perplexed Miss Adeline, who said in a low voice to Esterly, "I don't feel as if it was right to laugh at the old gentleman—he's rather broke, isn't he?"

"Broke!" echoed Esterly, in a voice that reached Grace's quick ear. Miss Clapp saw her exchange glances with him —she was nettled and said, "It's not so very uncommon for old people to fail, though my grandfather, Captain Clapp, who was in the battle of Bunker Hill, is as bright as a dollar. You remember grandpa, Mr. Lisle?"

"N—no—. Yes, I beg your pardon, I do."

"I *thought* so!" she retorted; and every one of her shining white teeth seemed to Lisle to express a triumph. "I

was mistrusting it might impair the memory to travel, and see things—we, that stay at home, don't forget."

Why these commonest of common-placeisms should torture Lisle, the two sisters, who sat on each side of him, could not imagine; but he actually writhed, bit his nails, and crumbled to atoms a fragment of bread at his plate.

Grace interposed to shelter him from this teasing hail-storm of Miss Adeline's. She plunged into the subject of art, a terra incognita to the pure native. In reply to some inquiry of Miss Herbert's, Lisle said, "You can hardly imagine my Vandal ignorance on these subjects when I went abroad. I had been trained for practical life, and had been delving in hard work. I hardly knew the names of the old painters."

"You know them, by your own showing, Lisle," interposed Walter Herbert, "as well as one of my fine lady Fifth-avenue acquaintance, who asked me the other day to come and see her portrait, done by one of the old masters."

"Pardon me, not quite so bad as that either, Mr. Herbert. I had had glances into the world of art—some intimations of its immortalities. You may possibly remember, Miss Herbert, an evening I passed with you, in looking over a portfolio of fine engravings? Your comments were instructions—revelations to me—do you remember it?"

"Yes—I think," replied Grace, hesitatingly; "yes, I do." That evening had left but a faint shadowing in Grace's memory. It was crystallized in Archibald Lisle's. "You had spoken with enthusiasm," he continued, "of Mrs. Jameson's book on Legendary Art. I bought it to study on my voyage."

"A costly book for a hard-working young man!" said Uncle Walter.

"Yes; but I would rather have starved out the price of it than to have been without it. Mrs. Jameson was born an

artist, she has studied art, she has lived in it, she has the preternatural perceptions and enthusiastic love of the true artist, with a strong nature and rectifying common sense that preserve her from extravagances. She has genius without its eccentricities, which we of the working-day world, Mr. Herbert, think not its concomitants, but its imperfections."

"Yes, yes, you are right, Lisle; the mortality that impairs its divinity. But what more of this book? Miss Grace never thought me worthy of imparting it to me!"

"Because you confessed, sir," said Grace, "that, like Sir Toby, you never loved the arts."

"Never *followed* them, my dear—always quote Shakespeare as you quote Scripture, verbatim. But come, Lisle, what did Mrs. Jameson do for you?"

"Every thing that could be done for ignorance in so short a period. She developed my love of art—for, from the moment Miss Herbert touched the ashes, I was sure there was some fire in my soul to be uncovered. Mrs. Jameson directed my observation, quickened my perception, imparted to me the laws of criticism, and instructed me in the legendary lore of the saints, martyrs, and heroes of the Churches, who have been the sources and subjects of the painters' inspiration, so that when I saw their pictures, they were not hieroglyphical, but relaters of their own painful or glorious history. This, I am sure, was an immense extension of the enjoyment I should have had merely from the perfection of coloring and form; and this I owe to Mrs. Jameson, who should be the guide of every traveler through Italy."

"As she is the delight and consolation of those who can not travel through Italy," said Grace.

An animated conversation ensued, in which many questions were asked about sculptures, painting, and music, and

musical composers, and answered with intelligence and feeling, without a particle of pretension.

Walter Herbert took advantage of the first pause to turn the current of conversation. "You young people will consider me as old as a pre-Adamite," he said, "if I tell you that I was born before art dawned upon the new world. Why, all you have been talking about would have been heathen Greek to your fathers and mothers. But I have sat at the feet of my niece, and learned; in my youth I knew no more of the names you have just repeated so glibly, than of the winged lions that clever man Layard is unearthing in the East. Now, if you put me to my mettle, I can talk with nine tenths of the young men and women, who have wasted winters in Paris and Rome, and they shall doubt my pretensions as little as they impose on me with theirs. But I have been edified more by your negative merit, Lisle, I confess, than any thing else. I perceive that you are *not* one of those travelers that haunt our stupid dinners and talk mere parrotry—palming off upon us battered coin, from which the original impress is quite worn out—neither are you among those, who, having studied the classics at home become self-constituted and most self-complacent critics, and stand before the masterpieces, elaborating fine things to publish about them at home. But come, my dear fellow, tell us something of the living world—of 'the million,' who, after all, saving your presence, my dear Grace, interest me more than Michael Angelo, or Phidias."

Then he showered upon Lisle questions as to the actual condition of the different nationalities of Europe, the character of its rulers, and the grounds of hope for its people. And Lisle, without dogmatizing, or professing to have made discoveries, gave the results of acute observation—sharpened by a republican education—and rare opportunities, in a manly

tone, and with deep earnestness, showing he had been more occupied with the destiny of the living men of the present upheaving time, than with the art of past ages.

When Mr. Herbert's questions were answered, he said, "You must pardon me, Lisle, for boring you; but, really, it is refreshing to see a young man who has gone abroad for something beside seeing the dancers, and hearing the singers of the old world, or at best to pass their days in galleries and museums, and their nights at operas, for the vanity of talking about Guidos and Domenichinos, and Rossini, and Beethoven. I allow for a light in a dark place, for my ignorance makes your knowledge seem prodigious to me; but still the wonder grows, how you got so deep into the condition and character of these foreign people."

"I fear," modestly replied Lisle, "that I have been making a great show with a small stock, in the fashion of the shopmen, who display all their fine wares in their windows. I owe my small advantage over other travelers to what they would regard as a disqualification. I traveled in my home character of working man, who had neither time nor money to spend on mere pleasure."

"And you did well, Lisle. I am, above all, glad to perceive your generous faith in the people of Europe, and your hope in their future. This is the true faith of a republican by conviction, as well as birthright."

Why was it that Grace Herbert, who had no ignorant or fine-lady indifference to topics of such moment as these—why was it that she felt a sensation of immense relief when the conversation was suddenly stopped by the invasion of little May, who had been impatiently awaiting the signal for her admission? Why?—alas, the progress of our story will reveal.

"Here, May," called out Uncle Walter, moving back from the table, and planting his knee for her. The bounding

child sprang upon it. May looked as if all good angels had brought their gifts to her birth-day; health and strength to her blooming cheek, and rounded and agile limbs, intelligence to her serene brow, gladness to her eyes, and love to her sweet lip. The "clouds of her immortality were yet trailing" around her. Archibald entered into an aside talk with her, to which she lent a gracious ear—children are instinctive physiognomists. "Will you give me that rose-bud, May?" he asked.

"Oh, no Mr. Lisle, I can't give you that. Aunt Grace gave it to me, that's why I keep it in my bosom." Archibald looked at the rose-bud with "fond and foolish thought." He felt still the spell of the enchantress. His long absence, his manly struggles had not yet dispelled it.

"What are you thinking about, Mr. Lisle?" asked May.

Archibald felt the color rush to his cheek, and for once he was relieved by Miss Clapp's nasal voice—

"You will give the rose-bud to *me*, won't you, May?" she said.

"To you!—no, indeed."

"Well, come to me a minute."

The child shook her head decisively, and putting up her lips to Walter Herbert's ear, and her hand before them, while she kept her eye fixed on Miss Adeline, she asked, "What has that lady got on her cheeks?"

Uncle Walter had the power of speaking, with scarcely a perceptible motion of his lips: "A piratical flag, my dear," he answered. His reply was heard only by his next neighbors—Grace smiled, and Lisle murmured an involuntary assent.

"I don't know what you mean, Uncle Walter," said the perplexed child. Her attention was again claimed by Miss Clapp, who took from her reticule a pretty bon-bon, and held it up invitingly.

"Would you go to her?" asked May of her counselor.

"If I were you, I think I should."

"If I were I, I think I should not," retorted May.

"There!" exclaimed Uncle Walter, "a metaphysician would have studied a year without getting as much true philosophy as the child has hit upon."

The signal was now made for the ladies to withdraw. May, not quite able to resist the temptation which Miss Adeline still held out, followed close to her rustling flounces, and was hardly in the entry, when she returned to Archibald with a little bunch of shriveled flowers elaborately bound, and tied in a love-knot with pink ribbon. "That red lady sent you this," she said, and skipped away.

"Blast it!" muttered Lisle, and threw it in the grate.

In half an hour the gentlemen came to the library, where the sisters were seated at their needle-work. Stitching may be a hard necessity to the poor, but it is a boon to the rich; one of the compensations of lady-life. It helps to fill up the ennuyante vacuities in conversation, and makes endurable the infinite tediousness of egotistic visitors. Rousseau discovered one of its uses, and found a substitute for it. He played cup and ball in the drawing-room; for, he says, "*quand tout le monde est occupè, l'on ne parle que quand on a quelque chose à dire.*"

"How have you disposed of Miss Clapp, of Clappville, Eleanor, our incubus?" asked her husband.

"She went off, lamenting an engagement to the opera."

"Now that we are rid of the outside barbarian, Eleanor, send for our boy, and show him to Mr. Lisle."

"He is asleep, Frank; and if he were not, you know I only show off my children to those who are approaching second childhood."

"You are right, Nelly—you always are," said Uncle Walter. "Some one says no man comprehends the old

poets till he is fifty. No doubt our baby is a Shakspeare, or Milton, not to be understood by you boys, Lisle. Poor Grace tried to make Copley admire your boy the other day, Esterly; but even his pliant lips refused a genuine smile."

"Copley!" exclaimed Lisle; "Horace Copley! has he returned?"

"Yes."

"Is he living in town? What is he doing?"

"Professing the '*dolce far niente*,' his old business, Archibald."

"He is everywhere a man of leisure," replied Lisle, with a slight sarcasm in his tone.

"Angels only know how to employ leisure," said Uncle Walter; "not mere men, certainly not an American man. Pray, Lisle, did you meet Copley abroad?"

"Yes, repeatedly; first in Paris, where I staid but six months, then at Rome; he came for the Carnival, just as I was leaving it to go to Greece; and when I returned to Italy, he was amusing the English world in Naples with his duel."

"His duel! we never heard of it. What was the occasion?"

"Oh, a trifling quarrel; neither party was killed, or even wounded, so it was but the gossip of a day." Lisle was no retailer of gossip. We give what he suppressed, as characteristic of our fine gentlemen abroad. The duel was occasioned by a husband finding some costly jewels in the possession of his wife, who confessed they were given to her by Copley. She was a silly little English "lady in her own right," whom her husband discreetly took home, and Copley transferred his devotion to a handsome French woman, whose husband would not have made a wry face, if Copley had bought all the trinkets in Naples for her. "Copley," continued Lisle, "went off to Paris, and after my return from the Pyramids, I again met him there."

"Pursuing his profession," said Esterly. "'*Chacun à son goût.*'"

"Surely," interposed Grace, "there is enough in Paris to employ, for any length of time, any amount of intellect or taste. Our young men reside there for instruction in every department of science."

"To which of these departments was Horace Copley devoted?" asked Esterly.

Grace did not reply—her thread tangled, and her needle unthreaded. The gentle Eleanor came to her relief. "I have been told," she said, "that Mr. Copley studied music scientifically in Paris."

"Yes," said Esterly, continuing the topic with, as Grace thought, irritating pertinacity, "he has favored us with intimations of his intimacy with Liszt, and Mendelssohn, and other musical geniuses, and his performance at a concert where there were royal guests!"

"Oh, Frank," said Eleanor, "it was not Horace Copley who told us of the concert, it was Mrs. Tallis."

"And he is an accomplished musician, is he not?" said Lisle.

"I am not a competent judge," replied Esterly; "but my sister can inform you; she is a particular friend of Mr. Horace Copley."

"Miss Herbert a particular friend of Copley!" rose to Archibald's lips, but he restrained the words to an inarticulate sound, which unmistakeably expressed surprise.

Grace rallied—she thought her brother-in-law's raillery persecution. "No competent judge," she said, coolly, "who knows Mr. Copley, doubts his musical accomplishment; he is not a man to stop short of excellence in any thing he attempts."

"A capital reason for attempting little," rejoined Esterly.

To Grace's unspeakable relief a servant opened the

door, and said, "Miss Herbert, Mrs. Tallis is waiting for you."

Lisle was escorting Grace to Mrs. Tallis's carriage, when he encountered Copley awaiting her at the street-door. The meeting of the young men was unexpected to both. Their greeting was civil, not cordial. When the carriage drove off, Copley asked Miss Herbert when Archibald Lisle returned?

"To town, two days since."

"Archibald Lisle!" echoed Mr. Tallis, who, for a wonder, was of the party with his wife.

"Archibald Lisle!" repeated the lady; "is he the young man who wrote something, or did something, that was talked of, a year or two ago."

"Not that I ever heard of," said Copley. "He is a mere lawyer, and as such was rather successful."

"Oh yes, I know to what Madam alludes," said Tallis. Tallis always called his wife "Madam" when he was out of humor. "Lisle was at this opera-house on the night of a famous riot, and behaved with gallantry—something beyond a mere lawyer, Mr. Copley. Afterward, he appeared in court, in his vocation, for a young man who had been drawn into the riot. The lad was an Irishman, and after his acquittal, his Irish heart burst bounds, and he told the court that Lisle had volunteered to defend him, while the young gentleman's bones were still aching with a smashing blow he gave him, 'maning no harm!' I chanced to be in court at the time," continued Tallis, "and I hardly knew which most to admire, the cleverness of the defense, or the young man's modesty, when a general observation was turned upon him."

"Lisle has rather a taste for that sort of thing," said Copley.

"What sort of thing?" asked Tallis, petulantly.

"Oh that, exactly—standing between poor devils and their just retribution. I do not know, but I would bet that he is a believer in mesmerism, spiritualism, homeopathy, and hydropathy—that he is an anti-slavery, anti-tariff, anti-capital punishment man."

"That is altogether what they call 'socialism,' is it not?" asked Mrs. Tallis.

"Don't talk about what you do not understand, Mrs. T——," said her husband, with conjugal courtesy. "I will venture to say that Mr. Lisle believes nothing that has not a foundation of sense. He is not made of the stuff that runs to humbug."

Arrived at the opera-house, the party went to a private box, so-called, but really so only as it permitted a partial obscurity to one or two persons. We have not inherited the English love of privacy. We are as jealous of "closed doors" in private as in public life, and all attempts at exclusiveness prove abortive. Our New York opera-house* is a tolerable approximation to Parisian taste and gayety. Loves and Graces are vivaciously floating on rose-colored clouds, and in azure fields. It is brilliantly lighted, and on this particular night it was sparkling with pretty and elegant, and, for the most part, very young women, with the fashionable, picturesque cloaks of the season, half covering the bare and jeweled neck. The youngest talked the loudest. Young men, with neckcloths of faultless tie and well-tended moustaches, were in attendance. The house was crowded, thanks that evening to the presence of a fashionable *prima donna;* but that our musical entertainments are usually crowded, is an unquestionable proof that our people have an unaffected love of music, and a growing acquaintance with its divine harmonies. Tallis was not in a happy humor, and he rather disturbed Grace with his cynical remarks,

* The old opera-house of Astor-place.

"Look at Jo. Osborne, Miss Herbert," he said, "he comes every night to the opera, with about as much ear for music as Bully Bottom—or I. Hear Phil. Dayton's bravoes! He does not know a bass from a tenor."

"Good heavens! Rupert, how disagreeable you are!" said his wife.

"Oh, I do well enough with opera sauce—a good condiment for a dull husband."

Copley sat behind Mrs. Tallis, and next to Grace. He leaned toward her and whispered, "Bad taste this! One should not betray a consciousness of the conjugal yoke, though it gall. Polite indifference is the proper succedaneum to love."

Grace did not reply, or smile. She looked at Rupert Tallis and sighed. She knew his petulance was on the surface, that there was sadness and disappointment, and much worth in his heart. He had resumed his eye-glass and was reconnoitering the house. "There is Lisle!" he exclaimed.

"Where, where, Rupert?" asked his wife.

"There in the parquet—near the Selby Smiths. Upon my word, one's air does improve by traveling; he has grown stouter—a nice-looking fellow."

"Quite stylish," said Mrs. Tallis, "well-dressed—is he not, Copley?"

"I am not an observer of dress," said Copley.

"Madam believes him!" whispered Tallis, sneeringly, to Grace.

"Who can that very pretty girl be, in half mourning, to whom Mr. Lisle is talking?" asked Mrs. Tallis.

The eyes of the Tallis party were now turned to the "very pretty girl." 'A child's face in simplicity, a woman's in sadness,' thought Grace.

"Mr. Lisle seems on a very cordial footing with her," replied Grace to Mrs. Tallis's inquiry. "She belongs to those old people, I think—they are moving to go away."

"Why," said Mrs. Tallis, "the old man is Steinberg, you know, Grace—the old German that keeps such nice music in his little shop in Canal-street. Your friend Lisle is evidently urging them to stay—quite a little pantomime." If Lisle had urged, he had urged in vain, for the party withdrew. Lisle returned and resumed his place, but not to possess it in patience or peace. Grace recognized the flashing of Miss Adeline Clapp's silk, as, attended by an old gentleman, whom she partly led and partly shoved, she pushed through the black coats that filled the middle passage of the parquet to the place vacated by Archibald's friends. "Oh, Mr. Lisle!" she exclaimed, dropping into the seat beside him, "was not I lucky to spy you out? Doctor Dayton was so kind as to bring me to the opera. Dr. Dayton—Mr. Lisle! The poor old gentleman is getting sleepy, and you know I can't go away till I hear Salvi in the last act; and I told the doctor you would see me home—good-night, doctor!"

Poor Archibald, without the grace of a cheerful resignation, told Miss Adeline in a tone of unaffected solemnity, "that he had an engagement immediately after the opera, but he would with pleasure put her into a carriage."

Grace came to the front of her box for the last act. Archibald's eye turned to her as a Persian's to the rising sun. The music and Miss Herbert's presence were in harmony. Adeline Clapp's incessant clatter was like the pestering buzz of a musquito. Grace was rather amazed at what seemed to her but an impertinent persecution on the part of a vulgar rustic. She thought Lisle weakly yielded to it, when, at the door of the opera-house, she saw him follow Miss Clapp into a hackney-coach. Her surprise would have been bestowed on the lady, if she had heard her say, "Not coming with me, Archy?"

"Pardon me, Miss Clapp—I can not."

"You don't mean so! I shall be frightened out of my senses to go alone with the coachman—don't shut the door—don't—I will get out and walk home alone, if you don't feel to go with me." There was no alternative. Lisle yielded to fate.

CHAPTER XV.

"And common is the common place,
And vacant chaff, well-meant for grain."

TENNYSON.

Of the many discords of domestic life, those that proceed from uncongeniality are most common.

Grace Herbert and her step-mother never quarreled, neither did they bespatter their lives with bickerings; they were both too well-bred, but they had no sympathy, and therefore no reciprocal happiness. Mrs. Herbert had a perennial equanimity of temper, partly constitutional, and partly sustained by self-complacency, and a kindly disposition. Grace was tormented with self-dissatisfaction, partly from the pressure of high aspirations, and partly from a well-grounded discontent with her own mode of life.

Mrs. Herbert studied Grace's happiness and convenience in her domestic arrangements, and made known, but not unknown sacrifices to it. She never conferred a benefit without the particulars of its cost.

"Take the carriage, Grace, by all means," she would say; "to be sure I did intend going out, but I always enjoy making a little sacrifice." And, "I have invited your friend so-and-so to-day; it is slightly inconvenient as the cook is away, but I can order a dish or two from Weller's. I do not mind a small extra expense to give you a pleasure." Expenses were lavished and not spoken of, when her own daughter's, Miss Anne Carlton's pleasures were in question. So easy it

is to float on the virtues, for which nature has made the channels.

Mrs. Herbert was perpetually in action, doing something, or suggesting something to be done, a disposition annoying to one of Grace's rather indolent temperament, who, lapsed into her own world of imagination, was disturbed, if not fretted by Mrs. Herbert's incessant materialities.

She came into Grace's room on the morning after the opera, with a French engraving elaborately framed. "My dear Grace," she said, "I have bought you a picture to hang in the place of that *old* discolored Madonna by your bedside, and then instead of that old-fashioned table under it, *do* place there the one Anne gave you at Christmas."

Mrs. Herbert seldom entered Grace's room, but when she did, she was sure to suggest some new arrangement of its furniture, that rather amused than annoyed her. On this occasion, instead of the sudden irradiation of countenance, Mrs. Herbert naturally expected from her gift Grace's brow clouded. She rose slowly and said, with some hesitation, "If you please, Mrs. Herbert, I will hang the picture in my library;" and she opened the door into a small room where she kept her books.

"It's quite out of sight here, nobody will see it; but, of *course*, if you prefer it so, it's your own, and you know I make it a point *never* to interfere with your preferences."

"Thank you, ma'am," replied Grace, and conscious how tardy and how cold were her thanks for the picture, she now expressed them.

"Oh, don't say a word; I was buying some new pictures for Anne's room, and I thought it would but make the bill a little larger to get this for you. I might have felt it by itself. But Grace," she added, "since you seem to set a value on that shabby old picture, I will have it newly framed for you; it really looks dingy on your *new* paper."

"You are very kind, ma'am," said Grace, "but pray let the old picture remain just as it is." Mrs. Herbert was not offended; she was not sensitive. She only mentally added one item to the great account of Grace's oddity, and entered a credit to her own magnanimity. She had scarcely gone, and closed the door, when she reopened it. Grace hastily wiped blinding tears from her eyes.

"You will go to Mrs. Tallis's reception with Anne and me, this morning, Grace?"

"Excuse me, Mrs. Herbert—I detest receptions."

"But, dear Grace, really it is your *duty* to go. There are certain observances that a young lady in your position can not omit without remark. The consequence of omitting these minor duties is serious—the sacrifice small. Mrs. Tallis's receptions occur but once a month. There may be some insuperable obstacle to your going on the next occasion. Opportunities seldom recur."

"There's comfort in that," murmured Grace.

"We can do our duties to *society*," resumed the incessant woman, "without interfering with our other duties. My house-keeping is pretty thorough. Few ladies keep the run of the new publications, magazines, and so-forth, better than I, and, I don't *boast* of my charities—far from it—but you know, my dear, I hold office in six charitable societies; so you see one may keep up with society, without trenching upon higher obligations."

"I'll go, I'll go!" exclaimed Grace at the first pause. Mrs. Herbert produced an effect on her, analogous to the monotonous dropping of water on the head. Again, to Grace's infinite relief, she shut the door, and Grace turned musingly to the old picture, saying mentally, "I would not exchange it for all the galleries of Italy! And put Anne's French thing in the place of my mother's work-table! Oh I still see her sitting by it, and still feel the tapping of her pale, thin fin-

gers, when she would call me her 'meddlesome Matty.'" The dingy print was Raphael's "Madonna della Seggiola." Grace's last recollection of her mother was of her hanging this picture beside her crib, and then folding her in her arms, while she murmured a prayer. Time had interpreted the action, and the vision of her parent was blended with the glorification of maternity in the sweet Virgin-mother. Grace should have simply told the fact to Mrs. Herbert—Eleanor would have done so, Grace could not. How subtly are the elements of character commingled and diversified!

Grace thus reports the "reception" in the following letter to Alice Clifford:

"Dear Alice:—

"When I think that school-girls' friendships are, for the most part, mere accidents of propinquity, I rejoice that ours, like all true matches, was fore-ordained. I began with making you my pet, I believe you are five years my junior, and now you are my confidante—partly, because you are true as steel, and will not betray what I tell you, and partly that you will not *advise* me, or chide me; and you are unmarried—kind to kind, is natural. Perhaps you will divine that I am trying to silence my conscience that tells me my sister Eleanor should be my confidante; that a sister—and such a sister!—is the nearest friend, the friend Heaven bestowed; and truly Eleanor would be my elect friend from all the world, but that she is married. She has projected herself into another self, and, though two make one for themselves, they make two for the rest of us.

"I was forced to a matinée yesterday morning, my dear Alice. The fashion of matinées, or morning receptions, was unknown in our school-days at dear Monsieur Canda's, but they may, by this time, have reached the utmost limit of our

social civilization. The circles are concentric; we of this overgrown city pertaining to the innermost, throw a fashion in here, and, plash, every circle is correspondent to the remotest inland town. Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Chicago may have their matinées by this time—follies catch, like 'fire on the mountains.'

"'Let me take you,' in mesmeric fashion, to one of these fashionable gatherings. The carriage is at the door. I propose walking, but am prevented by one of my step-mother's eternal remonstrances, 'Dear Grace, you have on a carriage-dress—it is not the custom to walk to matinées. And you know, if Anne and I *drive*, and you *walk*, it has an appearance, and people *will* observe. I have heard that, in London, servants are often impertinent to visitors who come on foot,' etc., etc. So, dear Alice, we are not only to be moulded by the customs of London fine people, but by the notions of London footmen. I yielded—I always do—not gracefully, for I sat in sullen silence, annoyed at losing the enjoyment of the glorious winter's day. The air was clear and crisp—iced-champagne—not a city odor in the atmosphere. People walked as if freshly charged with life; old age was quickened, and smiling; even the little beggars, with their alms-baskets, filled or empty it mattered not which, instead of sadly sniveling on alone, and dropping stealthily into the areas, were shouting along in merry companies, or pitching pennies in playful groups. Truly, Alice, if I had followed my bent, I would rather have partaken of their rags and their glee, than to share the chattering of Anne Carlton and her mother, and to be bound up in their most insipid life.

"But we are at Mrs. Tallis's door, in the Fifth Avenue. Half a dozen equipages, more or less splendid, precede us, and while we await our turn, Uncle Walter, leaning on Archibald Lisle's arm, joins us—A. L. is an old friend of

your family. Of course you know all about him. But perhaps you do not know how prodigiously Uncle Walter takes to him.

"'Lisle has been supporting me,' he said; 'I can bear a grip from my old enemy'—poor uncle is suffering with a twinge of the gout—'with such a staff to lean upon. Come, Lisle, go into Mrs. Tallis's with us.'

"Mr. Lisle declined. I earnestly seconded Uncle Walter, but Mr. Lisle, though he seemed well inclined to yield to my intreaties, persisted, alleging that he belonged to the working world, and could not indulge in such luxuries as matinées. Luxuries! Oh, Alice, what a diamond fountain in the desert would such a man be in our fashionable society!

"Just as it came to our turn to alight, 'There is Mr. Copley and Sam Belson!' exclaimed Anne Carlton. 'Oh, mamma, look at Horace Copley's new turn-out. Is it not splendid? Why, they are stopping! What lovely horses! Oh I do so hope they are going in!' Copley offered me his arm; Belson gave his to Anne. We advanced slowly, for Mrs. Herbert was before us with Uncle Walter, who made slow progress with his gouty feet. Mr. Lisle was walking lingeringly away. I met his eye as he looked back. I felt annoyed that he should have seen Horace Copley, whom I know he distrusts, in company with Sam Belson, a dissipated, idle—fashionable!—fellow. 'Auh, Mr. Belson,' drawled out Anne Carlton, in a coaxing tone, 'come in with us; it's so nice at a reception, if we can have two or three gentlemen—distingués, you know! Mrs. Tallis says it's such a bore when there are only ladies.' Both gentlemen declined; Copley assigning his dread of entanglement in the meshes of a reception. The drawing-room door was ajar. Mrs. Tallis, hearing Copley's voice, came to the door and urged these gentlemen to enter; they persisted, and she

seemed piqued and much nettled, when, on her rëentering, Mrs. Milnor—a regular gossip, compounded of ear and tongue—said, 'How quick one hears some voices. I sat close by the door, but I did not recognize Mr. Copley's!'

"I found a seat near Julia Travers. You remember what a little earnest student she was at Monsieur Canda's. She is just as earnest now at the best tasks of life. Uncle Walter, who had lingered at the landing of the marble staircase, to look at a very tolerable fresco copy of Guido's Aurora, joined us. Mrs. Milnor laid her hand on his arm, he shrunk from her touch. He is as electrical as a cat, and can not endure contact with a person to whom he is antagonistic. Nothing daunted by his repulsion, she asked him, in an eager tone, if he knew who the lady was sitting silent at the other end of the room?

"'Is any one silent in this Babel?' replied Uncle Walter, without more directly honoring the question.

"'How funny you always are, Mr. Herbert! I mean the lady in the lemon-colored silk, with a green bonnet, and scarlet geraniums, who sits under the Cupid and Psyche?'

"'The Cupid and Psyche!' echoed Uncle Walter. 'Ah, Grace, do you know, the other day I brought our May here to see Mrs. Tallis's little girl. She looked round upon all the fine things, absolutely confounded, till, her eye lighting on that group, her Scripture lessons came to her aid, and she said, "I know that, Uncle Walter—I know that! It's Jacob wrestling with the Angel."'

"'Dear little innocent!' exclaimed Mrs. Milnor; 'it may not harm children to see naked figures; but, surely, Mr. Herbert, at your age, you can't approve of it. (Uncle Walter did not look any more propitious for this reference to his age.) There's a Ganymede on the opposite side—how

perfectly demoralizing! There now, Miss Herbert, that lady is bowing to you. You must know her?'

"'Yes, I have that honor—Miss Adeline Clapp.

"'Oh, I almost knew it was she,' said Mrs. Milnor. 'Is Miss Clapp engaged to Mr. Lisle?'

"'I really am not favored with her confidence,' I replied.

"'Archibald Lisle engaged to Miss Clapp!' murmured Uncle Walter, with an expression of irrepressible contempt.

"'Well, I have it on very good authority,' retorted Mrs. Milnor. 'Miss Clapp as good as told a particular friend of mine that she is engaged to Mr. Lisle.' Uncle Walter and I exchanged glances. Mrs. Milnor perceived she had succeeded in fixing our attention.

"'I really think,' she continued, 'that if that young woman is interested in young Lisle, some one ought to tell her what was told me about him.'

"'What, in heaven's name, was told you, madam?' asked Uncle Walter, now unable to conceal his interest, or even to moderate it.

"'Oh, I should not like to spread the report; but of course you will be discreet.' And perceiving, with evident satisfaction, that there were three persons within reach of her lowered voice, she proceeded: 'You know that little music-shop in Canal-street, kept by old Steinberg. It has been there forever. There is no one lives in the house but the old man and his wife. When Lisle returned from abroad, he brought a very pretty young girl there. There he visits her every day; and a friend of mine met him driving out with her. Old Steinberg and his wife are respectable; but, then, you know, foreigners never think any thing of such things. It is really too true, as one of my friends says, when our young men go abroad, they do as the

Romans do, and what is worse, when they come home they do as the Romans do.'

"So far, Uncle Walter maintained silence. 'From whom did you get this trumpery, madam?' he now asked.

"'Trumpery! Mr. Herbert. I don't call truth trumpery. I can assure you I have good authority. My sempstress lives next door to the Steinbergs, and she has eyes; and besides, if you will insist upon proof—the other day I went into Steinberg's with Sam Belson, and we both saw Mr. Lisle in the back-room, talking with this young girl. Now, really, Miss Clapp should have a hint of this.'

"'Certainly; and perhaps you had best apply to your immaculate friend, Belson, to give it,' said Uncle Walter, and walked off, muttering one of those epithets which men lavish on women-gossips; whom they consider 'cursed above all cattle.' 'I confess I should like to have this matter cleared up, for I have some reason for fearing these surmises are not quite without foundation.'

"After all, this Mrs. Milnor, gossip though she be, par excellence, and absolute nuisance, is not the worst of women. She makes herself a common sewer, through which the idle rumors of the idle town run. She tells you of the last death, and the last engagement, the feelings of the mourners, and the motives of the betrothed. She publishes the freshest discovery of a flaw in a married woman's character, and gives—always 'on the best authority'—the first intimation of the possible ruin of a dear friend's husband, or son. But is she who furnishes the supply worse than they who create the demand? Does the gossip, dear Alice, differ from her willing listener, save in more loquacity, and less caution. But pardon my prosing; I go into society without enjoyment, and when I come home, I moralize without profit.

"I told you I was sitting next Julia Travers, 'a handsome plain lady,' as Mrs. Herbert's man, John, calls her—Julia and

I were friends; but, alas, our paths have widely diverged. I wanted to speak to her of Copley, but, like a coward, I began indirectly with, 'Emily Smythe has sent me a programme of Mrs. Seton's entertainment on Thursday. Mrs. Tallis, and your cousin, Horace Copley, are to lead off a new dance.' She made no reply; and I added, 'Mrs. Tallis rather defies public censure.'

"She coolly replied, 'I scarcely know Mrs. Tallis. I am here this morning by accident.'

"'And you do not go to Mrs. Seton's, Julia?'

"'No, Grace, you know I never go to parties.'

"'Do you condemn them?'

"'For myself, I do. The late hours do not suit me; and I must take care of my health, that being essential to me.'

"'And, of course, Julia, what is not fitting for you, is not fitting for others?'

"'That is not my conclusion, Grace. I feel my own life to be quite charge enough. I do not undertake to regulate the lives of others.'

"'You are very odd,' I said. 'Most people are generous enough to give their exclusive care to their neighbors' concerns. I do go to parties, Julia. One can not turn hermit at two-and-twenty, and parties, and receptions, and their edifying accessories make up our social life, you know. I dance the redowa and waltzes, and polkas. All this, I am quite sure, is contrary to your notions.'

"She smiled with a pensive gravity (that spoke no admonition, but left one on my conscience), and said, 'We must all keep our own accounts, dear Grace.'

"'And pretty poor accountants young women are!' said a certain Mrs. Hall, who had drawn near, and was listening; and who, the opposite of Julia Travers, is a self-constituted 'judge in all matters and things.' 'Waltzing,' she continued, 'is bad enough—even Lord Byron could not stand that;

but polking is perfectly horrid. I heard a young woman with my own ears—she a wife, and a mother, too—say to Horace Copley, that the black off his coat had soiled the corsage of her dress. What do you think of that, Miss Herbert?'

"'That it probably was a mistake, ma'am; as I fancy Mr. Copley does not wear coats from which the "color comes off." I am engaged, Mrs. Hall, for a polka at Miss Seton's ball, and I will promise you that my white tulle shall have no soil upon it; neither, I trust, will my reputation.'

"'Oh, if you are engaged to Mr. Copley, as the world says,' retorted the coarse woman, 'I don't say there's any harm in your polking with him.'

"I am sure Julia Travers felt the blush that burned my cheek, as suddenly rising, she whispered, 'Don't, dear Grace, polk with my cousin Horace.' I would have sprang after her to ask, 'Is it to the polka, or to your cousin Horace, that you object?' but even I dare not follow out such an impulse at a matinée.

"I was recalled to my surroundings by Mrs. Hall. 'I heard you observe,' she said, 'that Miss Travers was "odd." She is, decidedly. What does she come to receptions for, with her pretensions. Even I never do voluntarily. I was caught this morning.'

"'Then, madam,' said Uncle Walter, who had again returned to my side, 'you have been betrayed into choice company. One does not often meet Miss Travers.'

"'I do not admire her. It is not a good sign for a young woman to cut and carve a way of life for herself. All the Traverses are odd.'

"'I quite agree with you, Mrs. Hall,' said Anne Carlton. 'Julia Travers is decidedly odd, though a very nice girl, you know; clever, and charitable, and all that sort of thing.'

"'Pray, Miss Anne,' said Uncle Walter, 'what do you mean by odd?'

"'Oh, now, Mr. Herbert, as if you did not know what odd means. I always did hate definitions at school. Why, odd, you know, means—odd.'

"Uncle Walter put up his quizzical lips, as if to whistle. Mrs. Hall came to the rescue of the foolish girl. 'Mr. Herbert is teazing you, Miss Anne,' she said. 'He knows well enough what you mean. It's ridiculous for a girl of Miss Travers's age to stand apart, and say, "I am holier than thou." You know, Mr. Herbert, it is absurdly odd for a girl of her fortune to be Visitor at the Half Orphan, and Manager of the Colored Orphan Asylum! To drill little negro children! I hear she has her mornings for receiving her poor.' (Dear Julia, think of her modest charities being so pounced upon by this bird of prey.)

"'Quite a Sister of Charity!' ejaculated Anne, glancing at her own handsome image in an opposite mirror, and smoothing down her ermine.

"'As to charities, subscribing to societies, and being kind to the poor, that's all right,' said Mrs. Hall; 'but as to making it a profession, that is only suitable for a spinster of forty or fifty.'

"'Or for an unoccupied widow?' mischievously suggested Uncle Walter.

"'Yes,' retorted Mrs. Hall, 'if she fancy self-glorification. I confess I do not. I quite agree with you, Miss Carlton. Miss Travers is every way odd. When she goes to the country, she walks eight or ten miles a day—I should not wonder if she wore a Bloomer.'

"'How very unfeminine,' piped Anne.

"'Yes, she is every way singular,' pursued Mrs. Hall. 'She has gone off to the Swedenborgians, or some other absurd sect.'

"'Presumed to do her own thinking. *Very* odd,' said Uncle Walter.

"'Yes, indeed,' replied Mrs. Hall, growing red, 'it's worse—it's presumptious for any young woman to start off into a new faith, instead of humbly adhering to that she was brought up in, and which her parents will answer for, and not she.'

"I ventured to put in my oar, and told Mrs. Hall that it was a cousin of Miss Travers who had committed the absurdity of changing her faith.

"'Ah, so it was,' she said. 'Julia Lowe; but I fancy that without that little particular, I have made out my case.'

"'And yet, dear Mrs. Hall,' said Anne, 'you have not mentioned half her odd ways. She dresses, you know, quite in a style of her own.'

"'Simple, and becoming, is it not Anne?' said Uncle Walter.

'Mr. Herbert is laughing at you,' said Mrs. Hall, and with an uneasy consciousness that she partook his ridicule, and that her shafts had fallen short of their aim, she went off to another apartment.

"'How very clever Mrs. Hall is!' ejaculated Anne. Certain qualities, Alice, are ascribed to certain persons, and always reiterated at the mention of their names by the parrots of society. And Mrs. Hall is clever, if a quick perception of the absurdities of her fellow-creatures, and a coarse portraiture of them are clever. She had faculties that might have blessed her generation, and provided for this late period of her life the solaces 'that wait on age.' Instead of this, she lives, for the most part, in retirement without repose, brooding on follies she has no temptation to commit, and vituperating vices to which she was never exposed. She withdraws from our fashionable society, not from supe-

riority, but defect of sympathy. She pours contempt upon all social arrangements, but has none of her own. She has achieved her reputation by not letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would.' She was early cut off from the dearest ties of life, and relieved from its ordinary duties. She had no child of her own. But was there none she might have succored? Were there none ignorant, she might have instructed? None fallen, she might have raised? Was there no barren field she might have sown, and now be binding her golden sheaves—a sister of mercy, like Julia Travers, instead of the withered, bitter thing she is.

"While Uncle Walter was amusing himself, talking sense or laughing at folly—Uncle Walter can always pick an oily meat out of the shell of society—and my step-mother—who has a universal toleration for the wearers of velvet and ermine—was protracting her visit, I wandered about the fine apartments, examining marble statues, and groupes in bronze; Sèvres, and Etruscan vases, a real Turner, Landseers, and Schæffers, and yet but half enjoying them amidst stereotype discussions of possible engagements, and actual weddings, and all that goes before and after. Profound questions were agitated, such as, whether Mr. Seville gave his daughter her bridal diamonds, or whether they were presented by her lover? Whether a certain 'most lovely brocade' were imported by its wearer, or bought at Stewart's? Whether the last English nobleman afloat among us, said Miss Brown was the most beautiful woman he ever saw, and Miss Smith the most graceful, or *vice versâ?* Whether Horace Copley danced four or six times with Mrs. Tallis at the 'bachelors' breakfast?' I did linger listening when this question arose; it was decently debated in low tones, and I was suddenly cut off from it by that odious Miss Clapp, who came tramping up to me to ask after Eleanor, as if she were her intimate friend.

"'What a pleasant dinner we had there,' she said. 'A dear lovely child her May is—but a little saucy—don't you think so? Eleanor—(Eleanor!—how dare she)—dresses so sweetly. I admired her lavender poplin, so suitable for a clergyman's wife. Archibald Lisle seemed very much depressed; don't you think so?' She paused, and I answered that 'I thought him in excellent spirits.'

"'Now did you? Well, you have not known him as long as I have. He used to be as lively as a cricket. But of course he feels the old gentleman's death, and then, as I have reason to know, he left his family destitute; and his widow has to turn every which way to get on; and I daresay Archy feels for her, though he is but a step-son. You seem to be very absent, Miss Grace,' she continued, obtuse as she is, observing my apparent listlessness, 'but I can excuse it; I know, that in your situation, it would plague me to hear people talk, as they do, about a certain gentleman's flirtation with a certain married lady.'

"'Dear me!' exclaimed a Mrs. Melsy, who passes for the best-natured woman in society—a mere vitiated sweet—'how critical people are! I am sure I can not see any harm in gentlemen offering little pleasant gallantries to married ladies, and married ladies accepting them. It's very hard to turn them over to us old ladies while they are young, and as handsome as Mrs. Tallis is—a certain gentleman is so fascinating, and she did not marry for love, poor thing!'

"'Take care,' said Miss Adeline, nudging Mrs. Melsy, and pointing to little Elise Tallis who sat on my knee, examining the charms on my watch-chain, 'take care, "little pitchers have big ears!"'

"The child had probably had the vulgar adage expounded to her, for she looked up archly, and called out to her mother, 'Mamma, the ladies are talking about you!'

"'What good or evil are you speaking of me, dear ladies?' asked Mrs. Tallis, approaching us.

"'I can tell you, mamma; they said you were handsome, and you did not love papa, and ever so much about a gentleman—I guess they meant Mr. Copley.'

"'Hush, you little fool!' said her mother.

"'Why, what a little Pickle it is!' said Mrs. Melsy; 'we were only saying—'

"Oh, Alice! my cheeks had been growing hotter and hotter as these women brought into the market-place, and bandied between them, the secret tormenting disquietudes that I have hardly the courage to confess to myself, and never to intimate to another. I said something about Uncle Walter being waiting for me, and pushing my way between Mrs. Melsy and Miss Clapp, I rushed from drawing-room to drawing-room, through the whole suite of apartments, library, conservatory, boudoir, and all, looking for Mrs. Herbert or my Uncle Walter, and seeing neither, and coming upon the grand stair-case, I took flight by myself. Could I have acted more absurdly if I had been but fifteen? I left them, no doubt—those silly women, and Mrs. Tallis—persuaded that I am a love-sick, jealous girl. Well, the farce—tragedy it seemed to me—was not quite ended. At the door-step I met Horace Copley. He could not fail to see my agitation. I stood for an instant confused and hesitating. He gazed steadily in my face, but made no inquiry or comment. He never says or does a thing that another man would—perhaps this is in part the secret of his indefinable power over me. He told me he had just come to Mrs. Tallis's door in the hope of meeting me. He came home with me. He did not speak once during our walk. Yes, once. We met Archibald Lisle; he made a mis-step in passing, and nearly fell to the pavement. 'A blundering fellow!' exclaimed Copley. The exclamation was natural

enough, but there was something in his tone that, now that I recall it, does not please me. Copley followed me to our drawing-room. The piano was open, and we both went to it as if by a common instinct. He had left his flute here the day before. He asked me to play some of his favorite airs —he accompanied me. He plays exquisitely—always Italian music—I love better the German—and usually that which is the fashion of the day.

"Suddenly—oh, Alice! I could not tell you this if you were not a hundred miles from me—while we were singing that thrilling duet from Don Giovanni, 'La ci darem la mano,' he threw down his flute, seized both my hands, and gazed in my eyes with a passionate tenderness I never saw in his before; I withdrew my hands, he exclaimed, 'My head is giddy!' and rushed out of the house.

"My heart bounded, as at a release, as the outer door closed after him—truly, truly, Alice!

"You may think I deceive myself when I confess, that I burst into tears, and that I actually did not hear my Uncle Walter's heavy step till he was before me, followed by Mrs. Herbert.

"'Why, here you are, my dear child—why!—what has happened?'

"'Nothing, sir—nothing.'

"'Nothing that you will tell—that means!' and then laying his dear old hand on my head—oh there is a benediction in its touch, Alice—he kissed me, and whispered, 'God help you, my dear child—I can't.'

"Yours ever, dearest Alice, G. H.

"P.S. Of one thing I am morally certain. Copley never looked at Mrs. Tallis, never spoke to her, as he looked and spoke to me this morning."

Poor Grace! Horace Copley breakfasted with Mrs. Tallis

that morning, before her doors were thrown open to the world. He had flattered her, till the heightened color in her cheek put out, as he said, the roses in the bouquet he had brought her, labeled, "*Pour la rose de vingt-cinq ans.*"

But Grace was not deceived. There could not be a stronger contrast than between his ardent, steady gaze in Mrs. Tallis's beautiful face, and the perplexed look of blended hope and fear, of homage and love, that he raised to Grace's face; between his assured tone to the married woman's greedy ear, and the tremulous voice of curbed passion, in which he said truly, "My head is giddy."

CHAPTER XVI.

"And now I confess myself fairly puzzled; I suppose I ought to describe this ball; but what points am I to seize on, by which to distinguish it from a ball anywhere? There is not a dress or a costume of any kind that differs a particle from those in London or Paris." So writes Mr. Paget of a ball in Hungary; and so may be said of a ball in the upper circles of New York.

Grace entered Mrs. Herbert's drawing-room, dressed for Mrs. Seton's ball, just as her uncle was rising from a prolonged game of picquet with her step-mother. He turned his delighted eyes upon his niece, and commended her dress. It was of white crape, decorated only with a wreath of lilies of the valley, fastened to the waist, and looping up the skirt on one side. She wore a wreath of the same flowers around her head, drooping, as was then the fashion, to her neck. The white long stems of lilies were neither whiter nor purer than the stately, smooth throat they defined and set off. "It *is* a pretty dress," said Mrs. Herbert, in reply to Walter Herbert's commendation of its simplicity and elegance; "but as you have worn it twice this winter, dear, I am sorry you did not accept the new one I offered to you—this will be *the* ball of the season."

Grace felt herself often compelled to a conformity to the Vanity Fair she lived in; but in the momentous article of the toilet she adhered to her own creed, and maintained her self-respect in spite of the wordy batteries of her step-mother. "I should be *so* happy to give you a new dress,

my dear," she would say, for this ball or that reception. "It *really* pains me to think of the remarks that *may* be made of the disparity between your's and Anne's dress. If you would only accept a set of laces like Anne's." But Grace had perseveringly declined these gracious aids, and had turned a deaf ear to the repeated suggestions of "how easy it would be for her, if she would only give her mind to it, to imitate the trimmings of Anne's French hats, or to embroider collars or pocket-handkerchiefs like Anne's" Grace was persistent in her opinion, that there was a certain dignity in wearing a dress correspondent to the fortune of the wearer; and she held her time—though not flattering herself with any very valuable results from it—at too dear a rate to be wasted in emulations of French milliners and Parisian embroiderers. And further, in the excessive luxury of dress, and the striving after its paltry distinction, pervading all classes, from the "Mrs. Potiphars" to the house-maid (up or down?) Grace saw something *parvenue*, and, in honest English, vulgar. So conscience and pride both sustained her in a simplicity, which Anne Carlton whispered, "did very well for Grace, as every one called her a 'classic beauty,' and she was of that odd kind." Miss Carlton had no very lucid ideas of the classic.

"Wear this dress as often as you can, Grace," said Mr. Herbert, resuming the conversation where Mrs. Herbert had dropped it; "it's quite perfect—no furbelows—not an ornament."

"Except a meek and quiet spirit, Uncle Walter."

"No, my Grace, that fell to Eleanor in the division of your mother's jewels."

"True enough! But, Uncle Walter, you have not noticed the bracelet you gave me," she said, raising her arm lovingly to her uncle's shoulder; "perhaps it is a talisman, and not an ornament?"

"May it prove so, my child—preserving you from folly and mischance; it's an odd old thing," he added, turning it on her arm, as if examining the gems that were curiously inwrought with the gold.

"Quite an antique!" said Mrs. Herbert. "How fortunate, the present rococco style! One *can* wear one's heirlooms. It *was* strange of your grandmother, brother, to will you those bracelets; how came it?"

"I don't know. She bequeathed them to me, with an injunction to give them to my wife."

"Then there were a pair? I remember seeing poor Fanny wear *one* when she was a bride—what became of the fellow to it?"

Walter Herbert made no reply. The bracelet had called up memories of a fair young arm on which he had clasped its fellow, of a soft, loving, trusting eye that had looked into his heart the while—of hopes, perished long ago! His sister-in-law's voice made no more impression on him than the simmering of the gas. He started away from Grace, and walked to the window, and casting off these haunting thoughts, he exclaimed, "Here is your carriage, Grace; it's a cold night—don't keep the coachman waiting—don't fall into the detestable egotisms of fine people, who think that all sensations are bound up in their delicate bodies."

"I am quite ready, Uncle Walter, but Anne has not come down yet."

Uncle Walter a-hemed, and was politely silent for a moment, but his feelings had been set ajar by the bracelet, and the straws blew the wrong way. He even heard the coachman through the closed blinds stamping and clapping his hands. "Poor fellow—it's very cold out there!" he muttered. "Mrs. Herbert, what upon earth detains Anne? it's half past ten!"

"Oh, that's not very late!" replied Mrs. Herbert, placidly.

"Anne will be down shortly; we are getting later and later in our hours, you know—but there are advantages—"

"For heaven's sake spare yourself the trouble of stating them; they are not worth it."

"You detest these late hours, Uncle Walter!" said Grace.

"My child, I am no reformer. If these fine people will commit suicide, let them. The world will get on without them. The folly is the slow poison they choose; the folly for them, the misfortune for us sensible people, who are bound up with them."

"We immolate ourselves in a great cause," said Grace with a sigh.

"No sighing, Grace; do not be pharasaical, it does not become you. You are rather an independent young woman in your modes of going on, and if you do not like mingling with a crowd when you should be going to bed—if you truly think this an unprofitable expense of time and health—if it really be disagreeable to you to be embraced by the young men about town—"

"Oh, brother Walter," interrupted Mrs. Herbert, "you really *are* going too far."

"No, Grace can bear the unvarnished truth. If our young women are not willing to sully their purity, why do they dance this cursed Polka? and if they are not bent on throwing away God's best gifts, their health, their cheerfulness, their spirit of enjoyment, the value of their existence to others as well as to themselves, why, in the name of heaven, do they go to balls at ten and eleven, and come home at one or two, as the case may be, to suffer and inflict the consequences of such insults to nature?"

"Ah, brother!" interposed Mrs. Herbert, "you must not look for old heads on young shoulders; 'in youth and beauty wisdom is but rare.'"

Grace sat down, folded her arms, and was silent. She did not conceive that she expiated the folly she committed by theoretically condemning it, and she found no consolation in the secret impulse that carried her with the current, night after night into the arena of Vanity Fair. Besides, she was now in no spirits to measure the weapons of her wit with her Uncle Walter. Happily Mrs. Herbert was always ready to fill any awkward chasms in conversation. She could find a plausible reason for whatever she did or permitted. With sense enough to lay her own course, she trimmed her sails to the breath of fashion. She was so cool in her manner, and so rational in most of her opinions, that they were commonly received as oracles, perhaps sometimes taken on trust, as one accepts a sum total to escape the trouble of scrutinizing the figures. Receiving no answer to her last oracle, she proceeded, "One *must*, to a certain extent, conform to the world one lives in."

"Admit slavery with suitable boundaries!" murmured Uncle Walter.

She went on, unheeding it. "The world will not conform to an individual's principles or taste. If all people of sense and character withdrew from the fashionable circles, what *would* they be? And what *is* a young woman in Grace's position to do? Surely *not* turn Sister of Charity, like Julia Travers—or immure herself at home. Besides," looking significantly at Grace's bouquet, which was lying on the table, "it will be but a *short* sacrifice. She will soon be married, and then, like Eleanor, *mere* wife and mother to the end of her life."

"Like Eleanor, God grant it! and not like the scores of women, who, after this fashionable course, bring their husbands a dowry of invalidism to be transmitted to their children."

"What can keep Anne?" ejaculated Mrs. Herbert, who

tired of any voice but her own. She rang the bell and ordered John to tell Miss Anne the carriage was waiting. Uncle Walter went on—"Tell me, Grace, to-morrow, how many overworked sleepy men you met, dragged into these joyless revels by their wives or daughters—wretched victims! they must be in Wall-street to-morrow at nine. And Grace, my dear, see if poor Tallis is not biting his nails, and looking daggers at Copley, polking with his wife. Depend on it, Mrs. Herbert, the tendencies of this unnatural life are bad, disgraceful to our young world, that should have a fresh life of its own, and not fall into the rut of old world follies, into usages that have grown out of the decay of an old civilization. We are rotting before we have ripened."

"Thank heaven," said Grace, "here comes Anne at last!"

"What *in* the world kept you, my dear?" asked her mother.

"One can't always tell one's reasons," answered the young lady, pettishly; "and I wish you would not ask me, mamma!"

Mrs. Herbert held Grace's bouquet, while she put on her cloak. It was composed of rose-buds, violets, and other sweet and costly flowers of the season. Uncle Walter inhaled its delicious odors, which, like airs from heaven, restored the geniality of his dear old face.

"From whom, Grace?" he asked.

"From Horace Copley," she replied, courageously.

"Pagh!" he exclaimed, putting it down; its sweetness was gone.

"Uncle Walter!" said Grace, in a low voice, "you are north-east to-night—not yourself."

"I am not the trifler I sometimes am," he replied, gravely; and then putting his arm tenderly around her, he conducted her to the carriage. With her foot on its step, she turned

to him for his good-night kiss, and said, "You have filled my atmosphere with blue devils, dear Uncle Walter—make the 'reverse passes!'"

He kissed her. "God bless you, dear child," he said; "God save you from temptation, and deliver you from evil!"

This was not a cheerful preparation for a ball. Grace did the thing out of season. She gave way to tears.

There are few girls whose hearts do not soften at the sight of tears. "What upon earth ails you, dear Grace?" asked Anne Carlton, in a tone of real concern.

"Oh, I am—a little nervous this evening."

"Well, one does get nervous waiting, and I beg your pardon, Grace—and I will tell you how it was. I would not tell mamma before your Uncle Walter, for you know he does not understand such matters, and he only just makes game of them. You know, of course, I expected bouquets this evening—I felt sure of one—I had reason to; and when Justine told me one had come for you, I felt horridly, you know. I was sure there had been some mistake, and I should yet get one, and I waited till the last minute. And you know it is mortifying, when we go in together, that you should have one—such a beauty, too—and I none at all!"

"Take mine," said Grace; "you will really oblige me, Anne." Grace spoke in the sincerity of her heart. The sweet breath of the flowers was tainted to her, and she had a sense of relief when Anne, after decent protestation, accepted it, saying, "It does not quite match your wreath."

"Mrs. Seton's ball" was expected to be one of the most brilliant fêtes of the winter. Her stately mansion, like many other piles of brick and mortar belonging to our "merchant princes"—whose enterprise and industry express more potent oil than that of Aladdin's lamp—almost equaled the palaces of Europe in the luxury of space, and outrivaled them in costly furniture, and abounding decorations of

bronzes, scores of statuettes, with some sculpture from the modern statuaries, and beautiful pictures—not *all* copies.

As Mrs. Seton's door opened to her fair guests, such brilliancy of light, and music, and perfume issued forth as might come from a festa in the gardens of Gul in their bloom. The banister was wreathed with japonicas; pots, with the rarest roses, were placed all along the hall on each side; and vases, filled with flowers, were in every niche and on every table.

The young ladies met their matron escort in the cloak-room, and met there, too, Miss Adeline Clapp, who, bedizened, be-flounced, and be-flowered, as if to demonstrate how much she could afford to wear at once, was a most striking contrast and foil to Grace, even to Miss Carlton, who was expensively and elaborately appareled, according to the laws of those Medes and Persians, Paris milliners and French maids.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Adeline, with her imperturbable good nature, "how glad I am to see you, girls! I have been watching ever so long for Mr. Lisle to introduce me, but he always misses me, somehow."

"Oh that horror!" whispered Miss Carlton to her chaperone; "pray give me your arm; Grace won't much mind entering with her."

And Grace did not. Her Uncle Walter had cast a deep shadow over her spirits. As she entered a drawing-room, which the attractions of the ball-room had cleared of all but mere observers, she arrested every eye. Perhaps it was her discord with her surroundings. It was as if the solemn peal of an organ had struck in upon the merry music of a dance. But it was only the sensation of a moment. The stream of a drawing-room is too shallow for any thing more than a ripple.

"Who is that?" asked a *very* young gentleman of a pretty piece of French modeling, just "*come out.*"

"Miss Carlton. Is not her dress lovely? Pink and silver —perfect taste."

"I mean the lady behind her—taller, with dark hair, and splendid eyes."

"Not know her! You *are* a stranger in New York. She has been out four years! Dreadful! is it not?"

"What is dreadful?" asked the novice.

"Why, to be still going out, and not engaged, when one is so old. They say she was such a belle, and splendid the first winter. Now, of course, she can't have much attention; and if she appears another season, she will have only ladies to talk to."

A hard fate, certainly, if this little flippancy were a sample of her sex. Archibald Lisle stood in the middle of the drawing-room with a knot of gentlemen, who were discussing the last foreign news. He was in the midst of a sentence when Miss Herbert entered, and he finished it so abruptly, and with his eye averted, that his listeners turned to see what had diverted his attention; and one of them said, "Lisle, there's a lady beckoning to you."

"What lady?" asked Lisle, instinctively postponing his fate.

"Why, that one that looks so like a full-blown double hollyhock; go, Lisle—her beck looks like destiny."

Lisle advanced, but not yielding to destiny, he passed Miss Adeline with a bow of cold recognition, and joined Miss Herbert, whom, his imagination being sent off into flowery regions by the hollyhock, he mentally symbolized by the beautiful lotus, so pure, so graceful, so queenly she looked amid that garden of living, but very artificial flowers. Grace had not yet gone so far into the sere and yellow leaf, as to be left to the penance and mortification of the society of her own sex! Two youths, with fresh moustaches, and near their majority, had approached, eager for her hand for the next polka—for though she was not the "belle of a first

winter," she was, according to the parrotry of society, the most "*distinguée*" person in it. She declined their juvenile homage, and turning from them, she greeted Lisle cordially; and asking him if he had ever seen Mrs. Seton's winter garden, she offered to do its honors for him, and presently led him into a scene of such enchantment, with its soft light, its fountain, vases, exquisite statues, flowers, and fragrance of growing plants, and her who, to him, was the *genius loci*, that he seemed translated to another world.

Grace's spirits were relieved by the change, and she was unconsciously stimulated by a spirit correspondent to her own. They fell upon topics that interested them both, and, without being disturbed by the few stragglers that now and then found their way from the ball-room, they loitered away a half hour; to Grace, a half hour of pure enjoyment that she seldom found in society; to Archibald, one of the few half hours of life whose minutes have an indefinite extension, and whose end is like a stroke of doom. The end came—not pleasantly—by the sudden entrance of Mrs. Tallis; she, with Copley, retreating, panting, from a protracted polka. The meeting did not seem agreeable to either party. Lisle bit his lips; Grace looked grave and icy; Mrs. Tallis shrugged her shoulders, and Copley, who had entered all gayety and devotion, was like a masquer surprised without his mask. Mrs. Tallis sunk into the first chair, as they all re-entered the drawing-room, protesting that she was "tired and heated to death."

Copley was the first to recover self-possession. "I came here, as you know," he said, in a low voice, to Grace, "solely to meet you. You forgot your engagement for the first polka—three have been danced—and I concluded, from seeing your bouquet in Miss Carlton's hand, that you were not here. Why, may I ask," he added, in his most deliberate utterance, giving Grace time to circumnavigate the

whole world of feeling while he paused on a word, "why did you give the flowers to her?"

An evasive answer rose to Grace's lips. She gave the true one: "Uncle Walter did not like their odor."

"Is your Uncle Walter forever to thrust himself between—"

"Copley," called out Mrs. Tallis, "I am fainting with this heat—pray, order me a glass of iced lemonade."

Copley went off to do the lady's bidding, and did not, when he returned, recur to the interrupted topic. His resentment had been suddenly provoked, and for once he had spoken impulsively. But he understood the game he was playing, and that its success depended on his adroitness. He comprehended the advantage of piquing a woman's curiosity. He knew that the desire of conquest is stimulated by its uncertainty. He understood well how to calculate the lower impulses of human nature—the nobler ones were out of his reckoning.

Mrs. Tallis had fixed her soft brown eyes on Grace, while Copley was speaking to her. "Has he," she thought, "deceived me as to their relations?" She felt an emotion of jealousy, and abashed that she did feel it, and swallowing the lemonade brought to her, she accepted the first hand offered, and returned to the dancers.

Copley had withdrawn from Grace, and was sitting moodily at a table covered with *objets d'arts*, apparently occupied with examining them, but really watching Grace, and Archibald, who stood near her, fixed by her magnetic power over him. Near them were a cluster of observers engaged in the usual common places of "polite" society from Dean Swift's time to its present culmination.

"What delightful parties Mrs. Seton gives!" exclaimed a good-natured lady. "Every thing so perfectly refined, and elegant, and genteel. I do think the 'Potiphar Papers' are

abominable—they spread such false ideas of New York society."

"I suspect," said another, "that the writer of them has never been into our really 'best society.'"

"How beautiful Mrs. Mervin's dress is—real point lace. Do you know it cost $10,000?"

"Possible?"

"A dead loss," interposed a cynic. "Mrs. Mervin is so hideous, she spoils her pretty things; she should get a lay figure to wear her fine dresses."

"Is not it a brilliant ball?" exclaimed a delighted young lady. "I heard an English gentleman remark he had never seen so many beautiful young ladies together."

"He should not have restricted it to the young," remarked a very young gentleman. "There is Mrs. Tallis, she is full five-and-twenty, and the most lovely person here. So fascinating. I never talk to any but married ladies—and—" He looked at Grace, and paused, not exactly knowing how to finish with the compliment he designed for her.

"And elderly ones," she said, smiling an acceptance. Then turning to Lisle, she said, "Mrs. Tallis is exceedingly graceful—you do not think so, perhaps?"

"I do not think this dance admits of its display."

"You do not like the polka?"

"Not within the narrow precincts of a drawing-room, for fine gentlemen and ladies. I thought it charming, danced as I have seen it, by peasants on the green-sward, danced with vigorous activity, and spontaneous glee, to their national music, interrupted by rustic songs."

"I am glad you see nothing worse than the want of the open sky, and unlimited space; or perhaps knowing I sometimes dance it, you have modified your criticism?"

His reply was interrupted by their hostess, Mrs. Seton,

who, having too much bonhomie in her nature to be fashionably indifferent to the pleasure of her guests, advanced, saying, "Dear Miss Herbert, don't you dance to-night?"

"May I answer, Mrs. Seton?" said Copley, rising and offering his arm to Grace; "Your promise to me was only deferred." He had watched Grace, from under his half-raised lids, a second time that evening talking with apparent interest to Lisle. She was conscious she had wounded him, and, true woman, was ready to drop balm into the wound. She gave him her hand, though after her Uncle Walter's invective against the polka, she had half resolved never again to dance it.

Lisle turned away, dissatisfied with Grace, and dissatisfied with every thing around him. He could not look on her while she was dancing the polka with Copley. There is something akin to religion in the love of a pure and lofty spirit. It can not brook degrading associations with the object of its homage.

Neither reason, time, nor absence had abated Archibald's devotion to Grace. But now the conviction was growing, that she had given her heart to another, and given it unworthily. "If she decline to the level of Copley," he thought "the spell will be dissolved. I shall awake, and know I have been dreaming." Never was pleasure approached with feelings less attuned to it than Grace's when she suffered herself to be placed within the ring of dancers. That word "embrace," which Mr. Herbert had uttered so emphatically, rang in her ears. A single true word, uttered by one whom love invests with authority, gives a fresh force and aspect to a familiar thing. Grace had habitually danced the polka, like other young women, unreflectingly—shielded by her own purity, "in wardship of her innocence." Now, with newly awakened perceptions, she began the giddy whirl. Both she and Copley were people of mark. The

ring of spectators was augmented—the circle contracted—she felt his arm around her—she cast her own eyes down. She *felt* his. She felt his hot breath on her cheek. She had a confused intolerable sensation. Mrs. Tallis was among the dancers. She lost her self-possession in observing Grace and her partner. Her movement was irregular, and the two ladies came in contact, slightly disarranging Grace's hair, and Mrs. Tallis's point-lace. Both withdrew together to the dressing-room. While the maid in waiting was sewing the tear in Mrs. Tallis's magnificent lace, which her husband had given her a few days before—at a cost of some thousands, as a peace-offering for a taunt to which she had provoked him—Mrs. Tallis, quite unconcerned at the accident, was looking steadily in Grace's face. Nature had sown good seed in Mrs. Tallis's heart, but thorns had sprung up; cruel, and alas! common thorns in the field of a woman's life.

Grace returned Mrs. Tallis's gaze. It seemed as if the eyes of those young women were spell-bound, as if each were looking into the other's soul. Mrs. Tallis' suffused with tears; she wiped them away, and then holding up her handkerchief, an exquisite wrought-web of lace, she said, half crying and half laughing, "Think of my steeping this in tears! honest tears! I can not keep them back. What odd creatures we are, Grace Herbert! Would you like to know what has overset me so?"

Grace shook her head.

"Ah!" resumed Mrs. Tallis, "I understand that sad smile, but you need not fear confession. I have none to make to you. I was merely going to tell you that you made me feel as my little Elise sometimes does, with a look from her sweet earnest eyes. It seems to me as if an angel spake in their glance—nothing false can stand before it." Again the pretty handkerchief received gracious drops. "It seems so odd," she continued, "that we should have been sent up here to-

gether, at the very moment I was feeling—well—not very pleasantly toward you, and now the current is so changed. I long to stretch out my hand to you—to give you a warning—may I?"

"Certainly, but you must leave me at liberty to take or reject it."

"You are very proud—very reserved—but I must speak—I *am* superstitious; I feel a force upon me that I can not resist. Do not—for all the world and the glory of it—do not marry one who does not love you—Rupert Tallis tried that, and it has been nothing but wretchedness for us both. Grace," she added in a whisper that rung in Grace's ears long after, "Horace Copley does *not* love you!" She had grasped Grace's arm. Grace silently and coldly drew back. Her pride recoiled from the communication. The wire suddenly snapped that had conveyed the electric spark from her soul to Mrs. Tallis's, and kindled that lady's latent and best feeling. Her poorer self regained the ascendancy. "I have been very foolish," she said, "I do not know what possessed me to run on as I have done; but you will forget it all—come—we have been here too long, we shall be missed—come along, Miss Herbert!"

But Grace did not follow. The plough-share that leaves no trace on sand, makes a furrow in a richer soil. Mrs. Tallis could revert to the gayeties of the drawing-room; Grace could not. She sat lost in the depths of not very pleasant reflection, when she was aroused by Miss Smythe, who came to say that Mrs. Seton was afraid Miss Herbert was faint or ill, that she staid away so long.

"Oh, was it only your hair falling down? what a pity to lose your nice polka—with Mr. Horace Copley too—he is so fascinating, and they say he never polks except with Mrs. Tallis, and Miss Seton, and you. They say Mr. Tallis is so

jealous of him—it must be nice to make a husband just a very little jealous—don't you think so?"

"Charming!"

There was something in Grace's voice or face that startled the young lady, for looking at once serious, she said, "Oh, Miss Herbert, I beg your pardon—I quite forgot, but you know, if it is so, it has not come out yet. I don't believe that Mr. Tallis has the least reason in the world to be jealous. But do come down, dear Miss Herbert—I am engaged for six dances ahead. Was not it nice of Mrs. Seton to make this ball to bring me out—just because she was a friend of poor mamma—and she's been dead so long! It secures me partners for the winter, you know." And then, offering to reconduct Grace to the drawing-room without going down the public stair-case, she threaded the private passages of the house to one connecting with the dancing-room, to which three or four young men had retreated. The door stood ajar; and while they hesitated to push it against them, one of the men made a criticism on the dancers that transfixed them both. Miss Smythe put her handkerchief to her mouth to suppress a titter. Grace's cheek burned. These young men had just come from polking with young girls but just emerged from the nursery. Where were their parents? For the most part in bed. A few, perhaps, looking wearily on!

"Did you see Grace Herbert bolt when they came into close quarters?" asked one of the men.

Grace revolted from hearing her name in their mouths, and again retreated to the dressing-room, Miss Smythe following. "Aren't men funny?" she said.

"Funny!" echoed Grace in a voice that checked her tittering.

"But after all," added Miss Smythe, "it does not prove any thing. To the pure all things are pure, you know."

"A much-perverted truth, Mary Smythe; you and I had

better take the admonition we have been favored with from the impure."

"Admonition from those fellows—why that would be looking for flesh in the fish-market as papa says; oh, no, I go to church to get admonitions. But come, dear Miss Herbert, I really must return to my partners."

She did so, and Grace followed the little parcel of frippery, in no humor to return to the gayety, but anxious to observe Copley and Mrs. Tallis. The drawing-room they entered was nearly deserted. There were a few waning ladies there, a few wearied dancers, and a few more wearied chaperones. One *tableau-vivante* struck Grace. Mrs. Tallis sat in a chair of exquisite carving and maroon velvet that once belonged to medieval royalty. In her sparkling eye, brighter than the briliants that lit her hair, there was no sign or trace of tears. Mrs. Tallis's genius for the fine art of the toilet was the unfailing theme of Copley's admiration, and this evening he had pronounced her dress a *chef d'œuvre*. Her gown was an azure-blue velvet with a *berthe* and flounce of point lace. Her sleeves were looped to the shoulder with diamond agraffes, "showing off and setting off"—so Copley said—"her divine arms." One was encircled with a diamond bracelet, which, as she remarked flippantly, made half the women in the room break the tenth commandment. Alas! the hour was at hand when this same bracelet would have a mournful significance in her eyes. But now, she looked the light of a hariem, careless of any destiny beyond it—surely the faith that a good and an evil spirit are battling for the soul is natural!

Copley, as he stood leaning on Mrs. Tallis's chair, and bending over her, well personated a Paynim knight in thrall, with his auburn hyacinthine locks, his Saxon eye, and exotic air. They did not see Grace—they were working out their own problems.

There was another keen observer, pensively standing by the mantel-piece, and leaning his elbow on it. Archibald Lisle's present had a far, and very dim perspective. Supper was announced, and Copley, starting from his absorption, encountered Grace's eye, and moved by a resistless force, he sprang toward her and offered her his arm. Impulses are unequivocal. Grace felt a triumph in that which brought him from Mrs. Tallis's to her side, and he, rejoicing in its effect without analyzing it, forgot Mrs. Tallis, forgot his poor resentment at the transfer of his bouquet, and Grace forgot all her vexations, and the evening that had begun in clouds, ended in the coming out of one star of hope and promise after another—preluding a fair to-morrow.

But the night was not quite ended. At the departure of the guests, Miss Carlton's carriage was not forthcoming. Some lady said she had one, and unfortunately but one vacant seat to offer. Anne Carlton accepted it, saying in a low voice to Grace, in Copley's hearing, "You will not object to walking with Mr. Copley?" The night was fine, the distance short, and Grace—and certainly Copley—was quite willing to accept the necessity. They had passed beyond the crowd of coachmen and attendants, when Grace perceived they were followed by a light, quick footstep, and looking behind her, she saw a woman's slight figure enveloped in a shawl. She instinctively hurried forward. The footsteps quickened, till they came to a corner near Mrs. Herbert's house, where they were to turn. The figure shot before them, and then suddenly turning, just as they were under a lamp, she brought them to a full stop, by laying her hand upon Copley's shoulder. The hand was so small, bare, and wasted, that it looked like a starved child's. There must have been a spiritual force in its touch, for Copley stood as if he were petrified. The shawl that hooded the stranger's head fell back, and disclosed a face young, and yet old, for

sickness and killing sorrow had done the work of time, sunken the eye and hollowed the cheek; but suffering, in all its varied kind, had not effaced the divine seal from the fair young brow, from which the long tresses of tangled hair parted, falling back over the threadbare shawl. It was a strange meeting! Never were strength and weakness, security and ruin, brought into closer contact, or more awful contrast.

"You know me, Mr. Copley?" said the poor girl, gazing into Copley's eyes, and speaking in a voice that, though low and husky, had a most touching sweetness and gentleness in it. "Can you forget? Oh dear! oh dear! I can not!" Her utterance was with such effort, and so slow, that it seemed an age to her tormented listener before he felt her clutch on his arm loosening. He shook her off, and she sunk to the pavement, uttering no word or groan. Grace was shocked. She involuntarily paused, and looking back, saw a little spaniel whimpering over the poor sufferer.

"Pray do not stop," said Copley; "there's a watchman coming, who will give the proper aid. These wretched women haunt the streets all through the night; they learn one's name, and pretend some reason for one's notice or charity, as this poor wretch did."

Grace made no reply. She was grieved at the spectacle she had seen; but not suspicious. As they parted, Copley dared to raise her hands to his lips! lips just defiled with a cruel lie. He hastened homeward, avoiding retracing his steps.

He need not; the poor haunter of the night-watches had been taken to a station-house, whence she was the next day sent, unconscious, to the *hospital on Blackwell's Island.*

It was two o'clock when Mrs. Tallis alighted at her own door.

"Is Mr. Tallis at home?" she asked of the servant who admitted her.

"Yes, madam; he came home two hours since. He is in the library."

"Good-night, Rupert," she said, opening the library door in passing it.

"Come in, Augusta."

"I can't. I am tired and sleepy."

"Who came home with you?"

"Not my husband:

> "'More water glideth by the mill,
> Than wots the miller of.'

"Pshaw, Augusta, who did come home with you?"

"Ask your servant—the only escort you provided me," she replied, and pettishly shut the door.

Tallis did not degrade himself by questioning the servant, and went to his own apartment, without the small satisfaction he might have had from ascertaining the fact that his wife was not attended by Copley.

Mrs. Tallis went to her own room, and first, as women, gentle and simple, are given to do, surveyed herself in the glass. Her sparkling brilliancy had abated under the pressure of late hours and sundry dissatisfactions, but it was with a very pleasant consciousness that she turned away to the crib of her sleeping child, a girl of four years—a guardian angel, lent to keep sacred the marriage vow. The maternal instinct was very strong in Mrs. Tallis's heart. She bent over her child, and kissed her. There is a test in the touch of innocence—it calls up sad, self-accusing thoughts. Augusta Tallis dropped a tear on her child's soft cheek—there was a contrite prayer in that tear.

ARCHIBALD LISLE TO MRS. CLIFFORD.

"Thank you, my dear friend. Yes, I am getting into the old track famously. Some of my old clients have welcomed me cordially; and though I was cruelly knocked down from those 'steeps so hard to climb' of my profession, yet I am in no wise discouraged. True, my competitors shot ahead of me, but I shall gain upon them. There is nothing like the whip and spur of necessity; in our land, the poor working-man is on vantage-ground, the general sympathy is with him, and if he be capable, and in earnest, he has plenty of work to do. I have delivered two Lectures, made up of my foreign observations, which were well received, and filled my pockets. I have had many requests to repeat them. I shall not. A man should not be diverted from his profession by 'fancy work.' I have offers from booksellers and editors that will profitably fill my leisure hours, if I have them. Thus, you see, I can answer your inquiry satisfactorily. I do *not* 'regret the obligations' I have assumed for my step-brothers. I have economical quarters, and by avoiding hotel-life, and all superfluous indulgence, I shall compass my great object—their education; and after that, Yankee boys can take care of themselves.

"Do not, my dear Mrs. Clifford, be too anxious about your son Max. A very young man, without counsel and oversight, without indeed a friend, as he has been in my absence, could scarcely escape entanglements in this city. But take courage—he will come out right.

"Letty is very happy at old Steinberg's. My step-mother did not quite understand her—Letty is the 'china vase.' My German lessons seem no task, but a pure enjoyment to her, and she is rapidly fitting herself, by music and drawing-lessons, etc., etc., and by disciplining the little Steinbergs, for her future career as teacher.

"My dear friend, don't think me a coxcomb when I tell you that I am learning to pity a girl hunted down by a pertinacious lover. You may regard my relations with Miss Clapp purely comical; to me, they seem deeply tragical. If I have an antipathy, like that some people indulge for cats and spiders, it is just for such a specimen of humanity as this Adeline Clapp, too well-meaning to be shaken off, too obtuse and self-complacent to perceive ridicule, and too good-natured to be provoked. There is no weapon that can wound her, and alas! no armor that can repel her. Her brother was my class-mate. Her father had a place called *Clapp-bank*, near Cambridge. They were wealthy, had plenty of horses, and good fishing-ground, and abounded in the animal luxuries tempting to college lads kept on pretty straight commons. They were hospitable, and we ready enough, occasionally, to accept their hospitality. Clapp gave me a dinner on my twenty-first birth-day, just before I was graduated. We had a dance in the evening—a merry-making without any very scrupulous restrictions. Miss Adeline was a buxom girl, then some seventeen. I, however much I may have been profited—or corrupted—by the world since, was a shy lad then, and Miss Adeline's free and easy style was very acceptable to me, inasmuch as it knocked down fences I should not have had the courage to surmount. It was a moonlight evening. We romped in the garden, and took little episodical rowings, tête-à-tête, on the bay; I may have made extravagant love to the girl, but I can not by an 'honest trifle be betrayed to deepest consequences.' The woman is incessant. She butters me with presents. Both slippers and a smoking cap were sent anonymously, and labeled, 'worked by the giver's hand.' Then came a dressing-case with her name full blown out. This I returned, with a savage note, saying my small apartment allowed me no room for superfluities. She is ubiquitous.

She meets me in my walks—crosses me in my pleasures. My first dinner with the charming Esterlys was half spoiled by her presence; and a few days since, when I was invited by my friend, Lieutenant Orne, to a breakfast on board a government ship, there also came my 'hobgoblin.' There were more guests than seats, and I had just ensconced myself in a delightful nook behind Mrs. Esterly and her sister, when my name was called out from another table by my friend, the lieutenant. 'Here Lisle,' he said, 'make your way here. Your friend, Miss Clapp, bids me tell you she has reserved a chair for you beside herself.' The dreadful woman half rose to show me the place gaping for me. There was a general pause till I should make my way, and over the chairs and benches I went, jostling one person and displacing another, and submitted to my destiny as one does to inevitable death. She was as complacent as if I had voluntarily forced my way to her, and began talking about 'the commission.' But I have not told you of that. A week or two since she overheard Mr. Walter Herbert advise me to get the appointment of Commissioner of Deeds for Massachusetts. Nothing would have been easier, as I have friends in Boston. But before I had taken a step—in five days, came the commission, officially signed and sealed, with a private letter from a certain Medad Clapp, who informs me he has the honor to be one of the Governor's Council, and that, at the earnest request of his niece, he has obtained the appointment for me. 'Uncle Medad,' she said, 'never puts his hand to the plough-share, and turns back.' Dear Mrs. Clifford, is this relentless Clapp plough-share to drive through me? No matter what coldness my manner expresses, this woman heeds it as little as a steamer does a slight incrustation of ice. But to return to the breakfast. As soon as the general hum permitted, and with only a slight depression of her voice, she referred to 'that birth-day fête.'

She asked me, with a tone and look that perplexes and annoys me every time I think of it, 'If I remembered Judge Eastly?' 'No?' 'You don't mean so? Don't remember the judge sitting in pa's sanctum when we came in from boating?'

"'No, Miss Clapp, I remember nothing of that evening, but that it was a mad boy-and-girl frolic, and that I drank too much iced champagne.' She tittered at this, and 'hoped the time would come when I should recall it with pleasure,' etc., etc.

"Is it possible that the champagne affected my brain more than I was aware of, or that I said or did something which has compromised me with these odious people?

"Keep my counsel, my dear friend; my predicament is too ridiculous for sympathies less elastic than yours. Above all, do not tell Alice. If she love a laugh as she did four years ago, I shall lose all the dignity of age and travel, and be her butt when I come to Mapleton—God speed the day.

"Yours faithfully, A. L.

"P.S.—I am told that the Clapps, by their factory stock, and the rise of real estate, have become enormously rich. This fact accounts for Miss C.'s confident expectation that I shall throw myself at her feet. That will be 'when ourselves we do not own.'"

Mrs. Clifford's letter, to which the foregoing is an answer, intimated a curiosity to know Lisle's impression of Grace Herbert since his return. He did not, our readers may have observed, once mention her, except in connection with her sister at the naval breakfast. He at first wrote "Mrs. Esterly, and her glorious sister," then struck his pen through "glorious," and wrote "captivating," then effaced that, and

substituted "beautiful," and finally burned the sheet, and took a fresh one, using no suggestive adjectives.

"Trifles light as air are confirmations strong" to more issues than one!

EXTRACT FROM AN EPISTLE FROM MISS CLAPP TO HER BROTHER, ORONDATES CLAPP.

* * * "He's a trump—take my word for it, Dates. He lectured at the Mercantile last evening. I went early, and got a seat directly in front of him. It seemed as if he could not keep his eyes off from me! The house was choke-full, and all attention. You might have heard a pin fall. He was posted up about every thing t'other side, and told us a lot about Greece and Athens, and Egypt and Thebes. There were a number of literary characters present, distinguished authors and authoresses that write in the Magazines. He got, they say, $400 by this Lecture alone! Don't he know how to coin money out of talents? He looks like a different individual—so genteel!—you can't think!

"I am leaving no stone unturned to sound his feelings. I must say he rather plays off, but shyer fish than he have been caught by poorer bait than is at the end of a Clapp line! Don't you say so?

"No, Dates—I can answer you sincerely. I don't feel uneasy about Miss G. H.—I own she's a striking individual, and as I told you in my last, she rather took up his attention at her sister Esterly's, but then she's other fish to fry. She's thought to have the best chance of getting a millionaire—a young man at the top of fashion. He's said not to be as moral as Plymouth-rock, but fortune and fashion, you know, will cover a multitude of sins with us girls. G. H. is very *set-up* and ambitious, and she'll take nothing below the head.

I hinted as much to Archy—'a word to the wise,' you know—at the same time I alluded to the individual that could *put* one at the head—not speaking plain, but in a sort of parable way.

"Now, my dear brother Dates, don't you let on of *past or future* till I make the motion.

"P.S.—Tell Malvina I have bought a love of a bonnet at $50—don't scold, Dates! As Colonel Trump says, we must not spare ammunition if we would win the battle.

"Please ask aunt to drop my subscription to the Seaman's Aid."

We must be as discreet as Miss Adeline, and keep her secret for the present. In the meantime, she sits in her web watching her prey, inextricably inclosed, as she believes, in its meshes. Miss Adeline wished to come up to the standard of her own æsthetic ideas. She believed law was on her side. She would have equity too. She would resolve that dreadful problem of necessity and free-will by seeing her victim throw himself at her feet, unconscious that he was bound to her by a chain that no skill or force of his could break.

CHAPTER XVII.

"The horse which drags his halter has not quite escaped."

The pursuit of Grace Herbert was the present business of Horace Copley's life; he had set upon it the force of an unbending and relentless will. But there were interesting episodes in this pursuit; bowery and fragrant nooks on a perplexed and obstructed road. He had turned toward one of these one bright morning, when he was disappointed by finding Grace "not at home," and vexed, by learning she had gone on some "charity scout," as he termed it, with his cousin Julia Travers. He had urgent motives for deprecating her intimacy with Miss Travers. Mrs. Tallis was at home. He was shown into her boudoir, arranged with the luxury and taste that lend a charm and refinement to idleness.

The lady of the bower soon appeared in a white merino morning-dress, with a border of embroidered violets, and a cap trimmed with clusters of violets, beautiful, but exhaling no perfume, no divine essence—so much the truer emblem for Mrs. Tallis' boudoir. No one excelled Mrs. Tallis in those coquetries of the toilet which our pretty young women bring home from Paris, if, alas! they bring nothing else! Her little girl Elise followed her importunately to the door; she kissed her, and sent her back to the nursery.

"That is a lovely child of yours, Augusta!" said Copley.

"Lovely, indeed! She is to me the dearest thing in life."

"Dearest? perhaps—perhaps she is, Augusta; but—she ought not to be."

"Ought not! and why, pray?"

"The dearest love should be bestowed where it can be returned in kind."

"Should be given to my husband, you mean!" Augusta Tallis probably knew he did not mean her husband; "you would be quite right if there were any *ought* in love," she added, with a sigh. Copley answered only by his eyes. They glistened like a serpent's. Mrs. Tallis blushed through and around a slight tinge of rouge on her cheek. "I never loved my husband, as you very well know, and therefore I may say it—if I had, I should have loved him to the end."

"Your's is not an uncommon case, Augusta; few women marry for love."

"Oh, there you are wrong! Girls usually believe that they are in love when they marry."

"Pshaw, Augusta! How women hug their delusions. Just look around upon our acquaintance. Take out those who have married for an establishment, or to escape single life, or to marry before their cotemporaries, or for the éclât of an engagement, a trousseau and a bridal, and how many will remain?"

"Ah, Copley, you men of the world always talk in this way—you all hold women in contempt."

"Pardon me—not all women." Mrs. Tallis smiled; her vanity naturally made herself the exception, as Copley meant it should. His thought had flown off to one whom he felt that no mean motive could make to "stoop from her pride of place." "But, Augusta," he proceeded, "truly I am surprised to hear you say that you did not marry for love.

I knew it was a transient madness. How was it? You, of all women, would be governed by your feelings, which, I allow, do govern all loveable women. Tallis' fortune could not have influenced you, Augusta?"

"It did not—truly it did not. I married him because my father would not permit me to marry the man I did love. I have once truly loved."

"But once, Augusta!"

Mrs. Tallis made no reply to this exclamation; she did not even raise her downcast eyes, but proceeded—"My father did not compel me to marry Rupert—no, he petted me into consenting to what he called the dearest wish of his heart. Rupert was in love—I really believe he is yet—poor fellow! He deserved a woman that could love him. He knew I did not—I told him so. After being crossed in my only preference, I was indifferent to the rest. Girls must marry before they lose the freshness of novelty; so I pleased my father, and married Tallis." She paused for a moment, and then added, "and I waked from the excitement of a magnificent trousseau and a brilliant wedding to a vacant aching heart." A shade of real sadness passed over Augusta Tallis' beautiful face. If she had looked in Copley's, she would have seen a faint, derisive smile, but no more emotion than is excited by reading a common-place novel.

"Truly," he said, "we do these things almost as well here as they do them in the old world. But, Augusta," he asked in a low, significant voice, "has nothing filled that aching void?"

"Yes, yes, indeed. My child came and filled it—thank God!"

"Filled it! A child satisfy all the cravings of a woman's heart—that is simply impossible. Your maternal instincts are strong, but—" He paused, looked in Mrs. Tallis' eyes, walked across the room, returned, and unrolled a little

parcel he had been playing with, and held out an exquisitely carved ivory box, containing cigarettes—"I got this for you," he said, "do you like it?"

"Like it! it's lovely; but why did you break off in the midst of your sentence?"

"Shall I finish it?"

"Of course—why not?"

"What simplicity! Do you say 'why not' in earnest?"

"Certainly I do."

"Well, Augusta, to me the right to a reciprocal, equal love seems the dearest right you possess. No man has a right to deprive you of it, be he father or *husband.* Augusta!" he took her hand, she withdrew it, rose hastily, half turned from him, and said—not firmly—"Don't talk to me in this way, Copley!"

"I will not if you bid me not. I can be silent, I can command my tongue, if I can not my feelings. Sit down, dear Augusta; take a cigarette—a cigarette becomes your lips. Your lips become every thing. Shall I light it?"

"No, Copley; take them away. My husband has forbidden them."

"*Forbidden!* Is not the promise to obey as void as the promise to love?"

"No, no—I *can* obey. If I were to be married over again, I would leave out 'love,' and promise to 'obey' at wholesale."

"And let love go whither it would?"

"I did not say that, Horace."

"But—could you help it?"

"Oh, don't ask me such questions. I promised Elise to come back to her. I must go—you must excuse me."

"No, no—not yet. There she is going through the entry with her nurse."

Why did the soft accents of her child's voice and the

tread of her little feet sound like a call to her mother? Why did the shutting of the hall-door seem to bode her evil and self-reproach? Heaven sends more monitions than are noted.

Copley opened the piano—"Come, come, Augusta," he said, emphatically, "give me music, if you will give me nothing else."

She sat down to the instrument, and he sat beside her. He turned over a music-book to a favorite Italian air. She began playing, but played falteringly. He hummed an accompaniment. She felt his arm stealing around her—and she permitted it.

At this moment her husband, whom she believed to be a hundred miles out of the city, entered the boudoir, and was close to them before they heard him. Both, startled by his exclamation, rose and faced him. Before either spoke, he gave Copley a blow that sent him reeling against the sharp corner of the mantel. He staggered into a chair. The blood flowed from his head. He was deadly pale, and fainting. "You have killed him, Rupert!" said Mrs. Tallis, too much terrified to think of any thing but Copley's condition. She supported his head, and endeavored to staunch the blood with her handkerchief. Tallis stood with his arms folded, looking fiercely at both. In a few moments, that seemed endless to the husband and wife, Copley showed signs of consciousness. Tallis rang the bell, and ordered a servant to call a carriage, and to send one of the maids with water, bandages, etc., saying coolly, that "Mr. Copley had hurt himself."

Augusta Tallis, pale with fright and dread, her morning dress dabbled with blood, withdrew. She heard her husband walking the room adjoining hers. She heard a carriage; she saw Copley, assisted by her servant, get into it, and drive away. She knew that she had provoked her hus-

band's jealousy, and she felt that she deserved his deep displeasure; but she was not far enough sunken in wrong to brook disgrace, and after a short deliberation, she opened the door into his room and told him truly, without the suppression or extenuation of a word, every particular of her interview with Copley. He believed her. She was naturally straightforward and courageous. Through her life of folly she had preserved her truth—kept intact this one saving virtue.

Rupert Tallis was a sagacious man, and, after the insanity of passion had passed, a just one, he had a bitter consciousness that his wife had never loved him, and he felt his right to reproach her much abated by this fact.

"I ask nothing, for I deserve nothing for my own sake, Rupert," she said; "but for Elise—poor dear little Elise—forgive what is past. You are not deceived—I am not false. For the sake of our child, let us maintain friendly relations, and live decently in the world's eye."

"Oh, Augusta, I loved you—you know I loved you."

"Yes, Rupert, and I believe you love me still. That does not help the matter; but we have one common interest, one inalienable bond—consider it."

Tallis was amazed at his wife's coolness, and he was touched by her appeal to his love for their child. He was surprised by the strength of character that seemed so suddenly developed. A woman driven to the wall can use all the strength she possesses. While he was still silent and perplexed what to do, and what to say, "I intreat you, my husband," his wife urged, "to put your just anger, and all selfish considerations aside, and to act for our child!"

"And if I could," he at last answered, "if you would be discreet, and I forbearing, how are you to be saved from scandal? Copley must challenge me."

"You must refuse to fight; you have far more than avenged any wrong you have received."

"But Copley is a fighting man—he can not pocket a blow."

"He must. He shall not expose me to an infamy I do not deserve—nor shall the life of my child's father be put in peril by my folly."

Her last words, more than any thing she had said before, touched and mollified her husband. He was still a lover, as his wife had truly said; and he deserved to be a happy married man! Mrs. Tallis heard her little girl mounting the stairs, and singing as she came. She opened the door and called her, and the child rushed into the room, fresh and exultant, as if love, and innocence, and gladness filled the world. Her mother sat her on her father's knee.

"Sit close by us, mamma," she said; "here is one arm for you, and one for father," and she stretched an arm around each, saying with childish fondness, "so I tie you together." The tears gushed from the father's eyes.

"She is our all—the—world," said the mother. "Let us forget ourselves, and live for her!" There was a tap at the door. Elise sprang forward and opened it, and brought her father a note. Mrs. Tallis recognized Copley's hand.

Tallis ran his eye over the few scrawled and blotted lines. "You are right, Augusta," he said; "and we shall go on in our own wretched way—it is a wretched world! There, read the note."

"Appearances were against me," it said, "and I forgive the blow you gave me. I declare, upon my honor, your wife is blameless. For God's sake, give no handle to the gossiping world against her. I shall not speak of the unfortunate mistakes of the morning. In justice to your wife, you will not.

"H. C."

There is a certain kind of honor recognized among every

species of thieves. So thought Tallis, as he took Copley at his word. And so this day passed without any apparent consequences; but the clouds settled down to Rupert Tallis's horizon—he could not see a beam of promise for a better to-morrow.

For the rest, it was as if it had never been, except—except, that with all the other days of all our lives, this was noted in the book of great account.

We do not like to obtain our moral by any process of distillation; but we can not help asking, if a parent does not yet make his child pass through the fire to Moloch, when, for the love of money—for stripped bare it is that—he wrests from her the best and happiest uses of life.

Augusta Tallis, at eighteen, loved a young artist. He had no fortune, and no expectation of fortune, for an artist nobly surrenders that, on the threshold of life, for a higher prize. She was willing to live frugally, if she might live happily. Her father willed otherwise. And so the good seed sown abundantly in her heart lay dormant; and vanity and levity, the bad weeds of frivolous society, sprang up, and grew apace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Straws show which way the wind drifts."

GRACE HERBERT TO ALICE CLIFTON.

"My Dear Alice:—

"All other interests are superseded just now by the alarming illness of Eleanor's boy—her only boy. His illness has come suddenly. But yesterday, he seemed to stand on the hill-top of life, radiant with the rosy tints of morning, casting down into many hearts the hopes and promises of a long, bright day.

"They may talk as they will about the equality of the sexes; but a boy, from the moment he comes into the world, takes precedence. Esterly does not love him better, perhaps not so tenderly, as he loves his girls; but in some sort he looks upon him as an extension of himself, as one who is to prolong his name on the earth, to be the heir of his honors, and by whom he shall exist among men after he has passed from them. And as to my dear little sister, why she has loved this boy, not only with a mother's instincts, but she has seemed to identify him with her husband, and to have a blending of her wifely loyalty with her maternal tenderness; hope, and joy, and pride—pride so sanctified by love, that it is scarcely pride—are centered in her little Herbert.

"I have loved him the more, we have all loved him the

more, for bearing my dear father's name—and there the little fellow lies, sinking with this hideous illness. Eleanor is divinely calm; while my poor brother, distracted by parochial cares, comes home to be soothed and upheld by her. Oh, how touching is a strong man's weakness! How marvelous, weak woman's strength!

"I wonder how I should ever bear such a trial as Ellen's. Could one fancy a man of fashion in such a scene! Heigho, Alice!"

"Thank God! my dear Alice. Eleanor's boy is pronounced out of danger. I saw him this morning, looking like a cherub, except his mortal paleness. He was sitting up on his bed, leaning on his mother's bosom. It was such a picture of maternity as the divinest painters have immortalized. The bed and floor were strewn with French toys. The French are artistes, even in this humble craft of toy-making. These toys were quite too costly for 'our money.' Copley most kindly sent a huge box of them to 'Erby.' May was blowing up soap-bubbles, enchanting herself as much as her brother, and his father was starting off a train of tiny rail-cars—the whole family force employed. What pictures has domestic life!"

We here interrupt the reading of Miss Herbert's letter, to interpolate some circumstances which she, for reasons no doubt best known to herself, omitted. While she was admiring the nursery *tableau vivante* she has described, the door was opened by Mrs. Esterly's Irish waitress, who said, "Mr. Copley had called to ask after the little boy."

"You told him Herbert was better, Bridget?" said Mrs. Esterly.

"And I did; but he asked, too, was Miss Herbert here?"

"I bade you tell every one that I was engaged, Bridget," said Grace.

"But he looked so craving-like, Miss Herbert, I just asked him to walk in, and I would tell yourself."

"Tell Mr. Copley Miss Herbert will be down directly," said Eleanor, with a smile. "Do go, Grace, and thank him for me, as well as yourself. 'Erby, darling, shall Aunt Grace tell Mr. Copley how much you thank him for all these pretty things?'"

"Yes, mamma, but I am tired of them," said the child, languidly.

"So you are, Erby," said little May; "but you arn't tired of the rail-cars papa bought for you?"

Grace went, nothing loath. Clouds in the moral atmosphere are as softening to the heart, as rain is to the earth. Copley's manifestations of sympathy had brought him into her domestic and interior life. He was no longer the mere drawing-room man to her, and when she gave him her hand, she thanked him with a cordial earnestness. His face lighted as she had never before seen it. "You rejoice with us," she said; "I see you do."

"Yes; and though you have not seen it, or perhaps thought of it, I have suffered with you. Has your servant told you—I fear not, these Irish are so careless—that I have called twice every day to inquire about you? About the little boy, I mean," he added, with a smile.

"Oh, yes; we all heard of your kindness."

"But my dear Gr—Miss Herbert!" he exclaimed, as the color, which the excitement of meeting him had kindled on her cheek, faded, "your watching and anxiety tell sadly upon you. It is a lovely morning, take a turn with me around the square—the air will give you new life."

Grace shook her head.

"No? then allow me to bring my carriage. You refuse that too? I may send a carriage from a livery stable?"

Grace was too evidently pleased by his concern, but she

declined, saying, that though the child was better, he needed more than ever all the resources of mother and aunt to entertain him.

While he continued to urge and she to decline with a tone of her sweet voice that made even denial pleasant to hear, the door was thrown open, and Bridget ushered in Archibald Lisle, saying, "He is in the nursery, sir; I'll call him down."

Lisle paused on the threshold as if he felt himself an intruder, as well he might, seeing Copley bending over the chair in which Grace was seated, and talking so earnestly that he did not hear the door opened. Archibald advanced instinctively, feeling it was less awkward to do so than to recede. He was cold and silent, but in this brief moment he had observed with a lover's acuteness, and interpreted with a lover's jealousy. Copley's supercilious bow as he turned and saw him, seemed to him to express the insolence of triumph, and the blush that dyed Grace's cheek at his startling interruption of the tête-à-tête, indicated the radiant happiness of a young woman in the presence of her lover, forgetting the world, and oblivious of the pressure of anxiety in her sister's house. "Oh," thought he, bitterly, "there are many ways of trafficking away the soul!"

"We have neither seen you, Mr. Lisle, nor heard from you, for a long while," said Grace, contrasting, in her own mind, as she filled the awkward silence with this commonplace remark, the devotion of Copley, during their anxieties, with the negligence of Archibald.

"I have been more than usually driven by business of late," he replied, hardly knowing what he said.

"Oh, business! business!" replied Grace, "it is the slave-driver of the North, worse than the dragons of old, that lived on fair damsels and young children. Business in New York devours all the charities of life."

"There are some fortunate exempts," retorted Lisle, and conscious that he felt savagely, if he did not appear so, he was relieved by the reappearance of the servant-girl, who said, "Mr. Esterly is in the nursery, sir, and little Herbert—poor little man—hearing your name, is out of himself to have you come to him, and if you please, the mistress bids me to show you up."

Archibald went, and was received with enthusiasm by the little people. He had that sort of magnetism for them which comes from loving instincts—children can not be bribed. All the toys of Paris would not have bought from May the glad shout with which she greeted Archibald's entrance, or the soft caress of the little boy, as he laid his pale cheek to Lisle's, and said, "Erby loves you all the world, Archy Lisle!" It mattered not that Lisle had sent no toys, nor that, when he had called in season or out of season to satisfy himself of the condition of his friends, he had not trumpeted the attention, by sending up his name. He was not one of those who light a candle and set it on every molehill. He knew, the Esterlys knew he sympathized in all their joys and sorrows, and that was enough.

When Grace shortly after returned to the nursery, Archibald was in low and earnest conversation with her brother-in-law; her sister was out of the room, and she took her post at the bed-side. The little boy was tired and restless, and sending May, who was always a little over-excited by Archy's presence, away, she applied herself to the task of soothing the sick child.

An old and ugly woman, if she do the work of a nurse, is thereby for the time transformed into one of those "angels that God makes his ministers," and it was no wonder that Archibald's eye involuntarily turned upon the bright and beautiful young woman, who, without seeming to be even

aware of his presence, was singing snatches of songs to the sick child, telling him stories, and lulling him to sleep with the magnetic strokings of her delicate fingers. His thoughts followed his eye. The mental processes of a lover are rapid, Lisle's might be summed up in the conclusion, "Oh! that such a woman should be lured into such wretched meshes!"

"You are suddenly abstracted, Lisle," said Esterly; "in my anxiety to get your opinion in my own affairs, I forgot you told me you had an important cause coming on at one."

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed Lisle, pulling out his watch, "I forgot it too!"

Esterly was too much absorbed in certain perplexities of his own to draw any inference from this honest confession. The friends parted, and Grace, while watching the sleeping child, resumed her letter to her friend:

"Time is the nurse and breeder of all good," Alice. Bad exhalations from old distrusts are passing off like a morning fog; they will pass and leave my firmament bright to the empyrean. Meanwhile I am patiently waiting the sun's ascent. Before I proceed, however, let me tell you that my happiness is not all self-centered; our dear little boy is still improving.

"Your family's friend, Archibald Lisle, has just been here; he is as changeful as the weather. Down stairs he was cold and abstracted, but when he came into the nursery, to the children, his heart seemed made of combustibles, and they, little incendiaries, fired it.

"My dear little patient is waking. Farewell for the present."

At Grace's last suspension of her letter to Alice, she was confident of the child's recovery. Dreadful are the vicissi-

tudes of severe illness. But two days passed when she was summoned to her sister by a messenger who said, "The child is dying!" Grace was rushing through the entry when Mrs. Herbert, who had caught the news, called out, "Grace! Grace! stop *one* moment, dear! Let me go in your place. Calmness is essential on such occasions, and I am *always* calm—do you hear me, Grace?"

"Yes, yes—yes, ma'am!" said Grace, and rushed through the outer door, and out of sight. Ten minutes brought her to Eleanor's nursery. She opened the door with a throbbing heart, and stood still at its threshold. The spirit of the child had passed on, and had left the impress and beauty of its immortality on the painless, lifeless form.

The agony of the wrench of separation was over, and the parents were kneeling before their dead child with an expression of meek acceptance of their Father's will, best interpreted by those words distilled by faith from mortal anguish, "Thou hast given and thou hast taken away—blessed be thy name!"

Little May was lying on the bed beside her brother, probably with no comprehension of the change to him, for her glowing cheek touched his, and her arm was thrown caressingly over him. Eleanor's head rested on her husband's bosom, her eyes were raised. She was as still as her dead child. There was no agitation, no sign of emotion but in her mortal paleness, in the deep crimson spots that stained her white throat, and in her tight grasp of little May's hand. Grace spoke not a word, uttered no sound, but fell on her knees beside her sister, and with all the fervor of her spirit joined in the prayer Esterly was offering in a low, tremulous, but not sad voice. There were no outbreaking, irrepressible expressions of grief; his prayer was rather a thank-offering for the gift of the boy, for the sweet blessing of his two years of life, for his passage through the gates of im-

mortality before temptation had assailed him, or the world in any way stained him; for his safe wardship in Jesus's arms, instead of their imperfect care. Esterly was not conscious of Grace's presence. If he had been, he might have hesitated to pour out, as he did, with a new feeling of its worth and force, his sense of the perfect fusion of his heart with Eleanor's in the fires of their afflictions—"Our day had been bright," he said, "but now our night is made to shine even as the day, and to our true affection the darkness and the light are both one."

We should not have presumed to withdraw the veil from this sacred home experience, but for the inevitable necessity of showing its effect on Grace. She remained at her sister's for the two trying days that followed, and then having returned home, she added to her long letter to Alice the final particulars of the child's illness, and thus closed it:

"Dear Alice, I never saw death till now. I should rather say, till now I never saw life, for that which to common experience is death, seems to my sister and brother to be the breaking of the seals of eternal life—their Easter morning.

"I wondered to see Eleanor so calm. I wondered, as she told me of the last hours, how she had borne the supplicating glances of her boy's eye appealing to her for help—the loving grasp of his little hand, the soft murmur of his trembling lips—the last kiss—the last sigh."

"These have been sacred hours to us all; but these even did not pass without a ruffling of my serenity. Copley sent my sister a basket of the loveliest white flowers. May was present when they were brought in, and when her mother said, 'Come with me, Grace, and place these around our dear little boy,' May ran away, and just as we had arranged the flowers, she reappeared, her apron filled with white

azalias, and violets stripped hastily from their stems. 'Here, mamma,' she said, 'do take away those flowers Mr. Copley sent. I don't want them to be around "Erby."' 'My dear!' said Eleanor, shaking her head; but May would not be repressed. 'Oh, mamma, do,' she said, 'Erby would like my flowers best; I know he would, because he knows Mr. Lisle gave them to me. I have picked them—every one—for him —Mr. Lisle won't care.' Tears were on the earnest little thing's cheeks. I saw Eleanor hesitated. I fancied she partook May's feeling. I clutched all Copley's flowers, and threw them into the grate, and then rushed to my own room, self-condemned. Is there a detective power in the innocence of childhood? What think you, Alice? 'No falsehood can endure touch of celestial temper.'

"Eleanor pitied more than she blamed me, I know; for when we met at dinner, she drew me to her, and kissed me with more even than her usual sisterly tenderness.

"We had the funeral service at twilight. Esterly went through it steadily. The words of our beautiful service seemed to come as freshly from his soul as if they had never before been uttered, and with as divine a power.

"To me it was significant that Archibald Lisle was present with the only two other friends invited, and that Horace Copley was *not* there, though he had called every day since the boy first sickened, to inquire for him, and in every way has manifested a friend's interest. And yet, I, even I, Alice, should have felt him out of place in such a scene! Is not this a dreadful confession?

"The white azalias encircled the dear child's shining curls like a halo, and the sweet violets were laid upon his breast. I heard May whisper to Archibald Lisle, 'Aren't you glad I gave all my flowers to "Erby?"' He answered her satisfactorily, kissing her, and patting her cheek.

"And thus has ended this chapter in my sister's mar-

ried life! Never before have I seen so demonstrated God's infinite blessing on a true marriage; how it gives strength to weakness, how it takes the bitter from disappointment, the sting from sorrow; how it gives the 'silver lining' to the darkest cloud, how it helps the loving pilgrims heavenward, how, dear Alice, it is heaven!

"And the reverse of the picture! I dare not look at it; how surely God's curse follows the vows lightly spoken—base motived—the ill assorted marriage, what a mockery it is of God and nature! God be merciful to us, Alice! Farewell."

CHAPTER XIX.

"A few forsake the throng, with lifted eyes
Ask wealth of Heaven, and gain a real prize."

THERE was no bitterness in Eleanor's affliction—no dregs in her sorrow. For years to come there must be a burning about her heart, and a moistening of her eye, when her thoughts turned to the lost boy who had left a life-long aching vacancy in her home that no other child could fill; but her resignation was perfect, and, therefore, so was her peace. Her external condition was most prosperous. She had respect and love, and troops of friends, and she had not what most people, affluent in happy circumstances are pretty sure to get up, a domestic manufactory of petty miseries. Her hours, from early dawn till late evening, were filled with thoughts and doings for others, that left her no time for insolent repinings, and petty egotisms. If she were assailed by neuralgia and dyspepsia, they made no inroads within her intrenchments of temperance, activity and cheerfulness. "Sickly ladies" expressed their wonder at her power of accomplishing, "but you are *so* strong, Mrs. Esterly," they said; and nervous victims would exclaim, "how fortunate you are, dear Mrs. Esterly, in having no nerves;" in the sweet security of their self-complacency they never imagined that her superiority was not so much in the machine as in the fidelity that regulated it.

But to Eleanor there came, as comes to all in the battle

of life, a trial that tested that strength which is made perfect in human weakness.

Her husband had been for some time, as we have already intimated, assailed by doubts of the soundness of points of faith which he had publicly professed and pledged himself to inculcate. His health was at first impaired by a natural ambition to sustain a reputation exaggerated by popular favor; then came this "Giant Doubt" to wrestle with, to conquer, or himself be conquered. His days were given to the spiritual wants and social exactions of his people, at night he encroached on the hours of sleep, to pursue his theological investigations. His conscience became morbid, and his temper irritable, and of course the free communication of all his anxieties and perplexities, and also the unrestrained outflow of the petulance resulting from an over-taxed mind and body were reserved for her whom he most trusted, and best loved. These are tribulations the adored girl little dreams of when she makes the promise "*for better and for worse.*" Eleanor's love was her angel through this fiery furnace.

> "Unwearied, unobnoxious to be pained
> "By wound,"

her patience was never exhausted, her gentleness never abated. But Eleanor's virtue was not merely feminine endurance. She relieved her husband of the drudgery of his researches, and often aided him with the suggestions of her sound judgment, unbiased by transmitted prejudices, and unobscured by scholastic sophistries. He acknowledged her help, comparing himself to a traveler through a tangled forest, confused by opposing and uncertain lights, who, ever and anon, catches a ray from the polar star, and thence is sure of his course.

Poor Esterly struggled on, as many a man has done, in the pursuit of absolute truth, till at last he came humbly to

receive just as much as it pleased God to make plain to him, and meekly to believe that this was enough for his salvation. But what was to become of all the rest, which he had received as proven truth, and promised so to dispense? Born and bred in the church, his most sacred associations were with it. His mother's voice blended with its prayers and catechism; its rites and service were sacred to him. Its history, from its first resistance to tyranny and bigotry to its present imperial position, was dear to him; and he felt that he had a son's portion in the patrimony transmitted from its glorious apostles and martyrs. This must be surrendered, or he must appear before the world in false colors.

There was but one truth for him, and he accepted it. He must make public his unfitness to fulfill the requisitions of the office he had assumed; he must, in short, resign his rectorship. Still, no loving husband and father, with a manly sense of his responsibilities, could, without much suffering, resign position, competency, and security—the means by which he lives—and take the chances of poverty, and external degradation.

The comforts and luxuries of life, its roast-beef and plum-pudding, are the oil that keeps the machinery of society in operation. They are the bribes that sustain the unflinching faith of the sectarian, and the partizan zeal of the patriot at Washington. The arguments of the Southern cotton-planter and the Northern manufacturer may be reduced to this element; and so may the lies of trade through all the vicious mazes of its competitions. He only who fears God, and loves truth more than he fears labor and dreads poverty, can command the acquittal of his conscience, and "the glorious privilege of being independent."

It was Eleanor's custom, when her other daily duties were finished, to sit with her husband in his study, reading with him, writing for him, and sewing beside him.

They were thus sitting together late one morning, when he, having finished, sealed, and directed a letter, said, with an expression of relief, shaded by sadness, "There—it is done, dear Nelly, and now we are on the wide world." The letter was a resignation of his rectorship, addressed to officers of the church. "We must give up our pleasant home on the first of May, and end our six years of worldly favor and ease in our possessions."

"And we shall turn over a new leaf, Frank, and begin a new chapter in life," said Eleanor, cheerfully.

Esterly looked at her for a moment, his eyes filling with tears of tenderness. "Yes, Eleanor," he said, "a new chapter—with struggle for me, and endurance for you, for its motto."

"No, dear husband," she said, in a courageous tone, that contrasted with his tremulous voice; "struggle and endurance are for both, and for all, and for the whole book of life. It comes under different forms, and with divers names, and whether it comes with blessing or otherwise, depends on ourselves. Now, truly," she added, rising and stroking the hair from his cold, damp brow, "I have but one fear for the future—and that is, that you, with your generous nature, will think it quite right to have anxieties for me and the children. Dismiss them, dear husband. Remember our partnership is without limitation, or condition. You must not have all the work, and I the play—you the struggle, as you say, and I the endurance. You shall command the ship, as you have done; but I must have my own little ventures on board."

"I do not quite understand you, Eleanor."

"Never mind—you shall to-morrow; you will be stronger and happier, now this burden is off your mind, and you can go forth with no responsibility to other people's consciences."

"I am stronger and quieter already; don't you perceive how your little hand has calmed down the throbbing of my temples? I think, Nelly, it communicates a magnetic charm from your tranquil spirit—love is the true magnetism. Oh, my wife, what a poor, helpless wretch I should be without you!"

There was an unsealed note on Eleanor's writing-desk. We shall take the liberty to transcribe it. It was addressed to the principal of the most flourishing boarding-school in New York—a lady so devoted to the duties of her responsible station, so noble in her liberality, and unquestionable in her disinterestedness, that she has done much to redeem the term "boarding-school" from the dishonor heaped upon it by accumulated abuses.

"My Dear Miss H——

"Thank you, for the list of scholars—fifteen in your school! These, with the promised five out of it, will supply the deficiencies in our income the next year; and thus, if we make a fortunate disposition of our house, my husband will be enabled to repair his strength by a year's travel in Europe, and rest from work. Thank you, too, for your assurance that I do not interfere with your accomplished musical professor, as my lower terms, according with my inferior ability, also accord with my pupils' smaller means. And thank you, more than all, for your gentle warning, lest, in my eagerness to afford my husband material aid, I lose sight of my first duty; that to my children and household. They are providentially cared for. An elderly cousin of my husband, Effie Lynn, has just lost her home. We are glad to give her the shelter of our's. She is a delicately strung, nervous little body, and will, in a way, increase my cares; but she will also immensely relieve them, as, being most

kind, faithful, and fond of children, I can tranquilly leave my girls with her during my working hours.

"Yours gratefully, E. E."

There are worlds in this sphere of ours as far apart as heaven and earth. At the hour of the scene in the rector's study, Miss Anne Carlton returned in her carriage from a "charity sewing-circle" to Bond-street, and entering the room, where her mother was casting up her weekly accounts, she subdued her voice on seeing Mr. Herbert taking, in his arm-chair, one of those frequent naps by which he judiciously refreshed tired nature, and said, "Oh, mamma, I have the strangest news to tell you—I see you have heard it?"

"Yes, I had a note from Eleanor. Of course, she would not leave me to hear it from common report—she knows what is due to *me*."

"She is perfection, I do think; I am so sorry for her! Is it not dreadful Mr. Esterly should take such a kink? What can he expect? So admired as he has been, not to be satisfied!"

"I do not view it quite in the light of a kink, Anne. Religious differences should be respected. Mr. Esterly has a right to his opinions."

"Of course he has; but why could he not keep them to himself? He need not proclaim them. I never give myself the trouble to think about opinions, and never could see the use of them, one way or the other." Was Uncle Walter smiling in his sleep? "For my part," continued the young lady, "I think it is positively wicked of him."

"No, my dear Anne, you go too far—*not* wicked—very unwise, *very* injudicious, I allow. If Mr. Esterly has unfortunately departed from the *strict* creed of the Church, it has been since his settlement, and of course he is under no obligation to *proclaim* it. His people would take it for

granted that he is all right. He is a little crotchety, but he *is* conscientious and *very* exemplary. It is a great advantage in *our* Church that the creed and prayers are all written down, and therefore the clergyman is *quite* relieved from responsibility. On days when sermons must be preached on particular doctrines he could *easily* get some one to supply his pulpit without incurring suspicion. *All* life is a compromise, as I often say, Anne, and a man who has a wife and children *has* duties to them. I certainly do not blame Mr. Esterly for his opinions; I have always been tolerant and hope I always *shall be*. I believe there are many good Christians in *every* denomination, but I agree with you, Anne, in thinking it is very inconsiderate in him to resign his place—such sort of men always run into vagaries. It is not so much matter *what* is in the mind, as that its balance should be preserved."

Miss Anne yawned demonstratively and said, "I wonder what in the world is to become of them?"

"Hush, my child!" replied the mother, pointing to Mr. Herbert, and then added in a lowered voice, "I would invite them here for a few months, for Eleanor's sake, but *you* know the noise of children is peculiarly trying to *me*, and at *my* time of life the doctor says, 'one must not undertake *too* much.' Besides Eleanor writes me they have a plan for the future—probably a school."

"A school! How dreadful to have such near connections teaching a school—earning their bread—thank heaven, they are not blood relations!"

"No, they are *not*." Mrs. Herbert had forgotten her once rejoicing in a remote blood-tie to her husband's family. "And besides, Anne, Frank did earn his living when he preached."

"Yes, but that's so much more gentlemanly."

Walter Herbert rose, surveyed the ladies, and laughed

aloud with little politeness, perhaps, and certainly with less mirth, and left the apartment.

"Did they vex you, Uncle Walter?" asked Grace, at the conclusion of a conversation on the subject which had startled the household.

"For a moment, my child, not longer. Anne is a silly little goose. What do chirping birds of her feather know of this earnest working world of ours? You sigh, Grace! Do you regret the step Frank has taken?"

"Regret, Uncle Walter, that my brother has acted sincerely, courageously? no, he would have denied his higher nature not to have acted thus. I sighed at comparing myself, an idler as I am, in God's field, to Eleanor. I saw her this morning as bright as the sun, and she intermits her activity as little. She will go on with her German emigrant class, though she has engaged pupils in music that she may stave off anxiety from Frank."

"Anxiety is Frank's infirmity, and she knows it, and provides against it, like the best of wives as she is. What a healing balsam is such a temper as hers to the inevitable corrosions of married life! Yes, I rejoice that Frank has been true to his convictions—a pity he is lost to the church. As I have lived, so will I die in it!"

CHAPTER XX.

"A bitter and perplexed 'What shall I do?'
Is worse to man than worst necessity."

When Grace returned from the funeral at her sister's house to her own home, Mrs. Herbert, after little a-hem-ing, said, "Grace, I wish to consult you—or rather, I wished to say to you that I hope and *trust* Eleanor's feelings will not be wounded by Anne not putting on mourning." Grace made no reply, and the lady proceeded, "It may appear odd to see you in mourning and Anne in gay colors—they are wearing *very* gay colors just now—but poor Anne has just received her orders from Paris, and it would be a trial, you know, to lay such lovely things aside, and see all the world coming out in fresh fashions before her. Next Sunday is Easter Sunday, you know!" Still Grace made no answer, and she proceeded, "What style of mourning do you propose, Grace? I hope *not* bombazine."

"Indeed, Mrs. Herbert, I have not thought about it—nor, I believe, has my sister. We shall wear what others wear in like circumstances. Our dress-maker, the representative of that august tribunal 'the world,' will arrange the proprieties of the outside—what is under it we shall take care of ourselves."

"My dear Grace, I did not mean to hurt your feelings, but I *must* say I do think *Eleanor* has thought about it. She has such a *well-balanced* mind. I apologized at the funeral for my bonnet; though it was quite plain, you know

—I have never worn *high* colors since your father's death—I do not think them suitable for a *widow*, but my bonnet certainly was not quite the thing for the funeral, being *rather* a lively brown velvet, you know. I told Eleanor that Lawson had not sent home my mourning bonnet, and she answered me *so* sweetly, *so* like herself!"

"What did Eleanor say, ma'am?"

"Why, she said I had always been so *very* kind to little Herbert, that she was sure I should do *every* thing that was right."

"Are you not content to leave it there, ma'am? I am!" and Grace went to her own apartment, leaving her step-mother wondering that her sister's affliction had not at all softened her; and Grace sharing the wonder in her own way, for as she mounted the stairs she said to herself, "If I and my step-mother meet in heaven, will the first word she speaks to me rasp my nerves?"

As she opened her own door, a fresh bouquet and a note on her table from Copley struck her eye. She filled a Bohemian glass vase with water and was about to put the flowers in, when the remembrance of little May's antipathy to "old Copley's flowers" struck her like an oracle, and she wavered between throwing the bouquet in the fire, or cherishing it in the water. "What a child! what a dastardly fool I am!" she exclaimed aloud, and placed them in the centre of her table. She then opened the note, written on exquisite French paper, stamped with Copley's crest and initials, written, folded, and sealed with a pedantic elegance, that does not indicate '*thoughts that breathe and words that burn.*' It began with gentlemanly commonplaces of sympathy for the Esterlys, and proceeded to express the intense anxiety he had felt for her. The note was filled with exhalations of passionate admiration. Grace pondered over each elaborated phrase, searching, as an

alchemist would for gold, for one spontaneous effusion of feeling, and finally she threw it down, ejaculating, "I hate this way of writing—if he loves me, why does he not tell me so simply and directly, and ask my love in return—could I answer him simply—directly?" She shook her head in painful doubt. Suddenly an inspiration, as she fancied, came to her. Persons of Grace's temperament are apt to mistake impulses for inspirations.

In her desire to relieve the monotonous frivolity of her life, Grace had repeatedly been present at the "circles," the technical designation of those *séances*, where the natural laws are supposed to be suspended, that fond mortals may hold social communion with immortals. She had become interested in a belief which relates to the mysterious elements of our being, and which she found implicitly accepted by a few sound minds and many honest ones—"men veracious, nowise mad."

On one occasion she had gone, at the invitation of a friend, to a large house in one of our finest streets, where a suite of elegant apartments were devoted to the reception of the spirits. The walls were garnished with fitting pictures, large sheets of parchment with costly frames, on which were written texts of Scripture in all known tongues, and the autographs of the signers of our Independence, interspersed with those of emperors, popes, philosophers, and poets from Homer to L. E. L., and from Aristotle to Jonathan Edwards; all these worthies having condescendingly visited the apartment of a poor divinity student, and there inscribed their names. While Grace was looking at these records, smiling incredulously, her eye was caught by a sybil, who, in a trance, was giving to the commandant at ——, a communication from his daughter, who had recently died. It was such as might come from the beatified spirit of a child—tears poured down the soldier's

cheek—Grace felt herself irresistibly drawn into the circle, and beside the "medium." She was not young, but just on the confines of middle age; her form was attenuated, and her skin so colorless and transparent, her form and face so spiritualized, that it seemed as if at any moment her earthly tenement might dissolve. Suddenly she opened wide her half-closed eyes, and fixed them, as if spell-bound, on Grace. Every eye followed hers to the beautiful and excited young woman. The blood rushed to Grace's cheek.

"There is," said the sybil to her, in a low, earnest voice, "a spirit present that will give you a written communication —if you wish—not else."

"I do not wish it," said Grace firmly, governed by her previous cool judgment. "Some other time," she whispered to the friendly medium, "I may ask for what I now decline."

"You do not look," replied the spiritualist, with a sad smile, "like one of the 'church of Laodicea.'"

Grace made no reply, but by a fervid grasp of the hand, and hastily withdrawing from what was becoming to her a "charmed" circle. This visit occurred just before the death of Eleanor's child. Now, perplexed by Copley's note—wishing for a better faith, and, yet distrustful of him, and dissatisfied with her own self-examination, she recurred to the medium. She had, since their meeting, heard much of her. Many believed in her preternatural powers, and no one had the audacious scepticism to question her sincerity. Grace was not a believer in mesmerism, spiritualism, and other kindred discoveries, (?) but, highly imaginative, she hovered on their confines, and sometimes fancied she perceived definite truths in their obscure regions. Grace had been told that this medium had the power of extracting from a letter the spirit and character of its writer, by simply laying it on her bosom, without opening it. She had seen striking evidences of this potent gift in rhapsodies written down while

the infusions of the letter-writer's mind predominated over the medium's.

Grace ordered a carriage, and in the twilight set off to find the residence of the seeress. She found in the outskirts of the city a small, quaint old Dutch house perched on the top of a sand-hill nearly undermined by the leveling processes of city improvement. Few of its cotemporary tenements are standing. Scarcely a material vestige, a gable, or a pointed window, remains of the venerable Knickerbockers; yet, thanks to the genius of our Irving—God bless him!—these primitive homes, and their sage proprietors are, to the mind's eye, intact and indestructible.

"Fit abode for an astrologer, oracle, seeress, 'medium,'" thought Grace, as she ascended the almost perpendicular steps to the door, divided horizontally into two equal parts. At the call of the massive knocker, the head of a "little marchioness" peeped over the lower section, who, on being told that Miss Herbert had private business with Miss Ida Roorbach, led her up a dark stair-case to an attic apartment, where, after lighting the three burners of a tall Roman lamp, she went to summon her mistress. She, as her name indicated, was of mixed blood, her Dutch father having married one of those omnipresent aspirants, a Yankee itinerant teacher. The seeress probably owed her spiritual inquisitiveness to the maternal source, as the Dutch superstitions were of the material order, concerning themselves chiefly with haunted houses, and human subjects. The apartment, frugally furnished, was decorated with beautiful engravings of Raphael's Sybils, Michael Angelo's Fates, and the heads of eccentric men and women of genius. Most conspicuous among these last was that of the great social reformer, Fourier! These were cheaply and ingeniously framed with pine cones, or braided strings of the more delicate cones of the hemlock. Each was surmounted by a chaplet woven of dried oak leaves,

of laurel or myrtle, as symbolically suited the portrayed individual. Odd volumes of Carlisle, Emerson, Miss Barrett, and Browning, were intermingled with German mysticism. A ponderous volume of Emanuel Swedenborg laid open on the table. Grace smiled as she read its title, and the thought crossed her that it might serve her oracle instead of the intoxicating fumes from the Delphic cave. The inkstand on the table was Persian, and all its adjuncts, the paper-cutter, sealing-lamp, etc., had a suggestive form or quality. Grace had the curiosity to examine a set of seals strung on a hooped serpent. Every one of them had either an inscrutable device or an inscription in a language unknown to her. But, perhaps the most characteristic of all these *objets de mystère* was a very beautiful half finished sketch by Ida Roorbach herself, in which she was attempting to embody the vision of a certain notorious disciple of Mesmer, who reports that being in the room, and in the midst of the weeping friends of a poor old woman in death agony with a hideous disease, he fell into the mesmeric state, and saw, as death overcame the mortal, the immortal overcoming death. The spiritual form gradually evolved, till, at the last breath, disengaged and glowing with etherealized youth and beauty, it rose, floated off, and received by loving and caressing spirits, it disappeared, wreathed in their arms!

Archibald Lisle had told Grace of this vision, which greatly excited her imagination at the time, and she now felt as if she were breathing a preternatural atmosphere. She started, recalled to the actual world by the opening of the door, and the ingliding of the genius loci. Grace stood for a moment embarrassed, and really awe-stricken, though to a rational observer, there seemed nothing in the little modest woman before her to inspire such an emotion. To be sure she was pale and attenuated to the last degree, and looked as if her venture upon supernatural power had been visited

with the curse of Prometheus' audacity, but not like his had her vitality been reproduced.

After a moment, while the Pythoness waited with an expression of benign inquiry, Grace said, stammeringly, "You will excuse my intrusion—I want to ask a favor from you—help."

"Of me?" she replied, looking up half incredulously at Grace, who, in the power of youth, beauty, and elegance, stood head and shoulders above her. "Remember you once rejected help proffered through me—you seemed then self-poised—self-reliant."

"I am not so—I am not," cried Grace, vehemently—"I am staggering in the dark, and want light, more than ever mortal wanted it."

Ida Roorbach smiled seriously, and shook her head. "We should try natural, customary, providential means of self-enlightenment," she said, "before we resort to such as should be reserved for perplexing exigencies."

"Mine is a most perplexing exigency," replied Grace, and then added, for she dared not evade the simplicity and truth that impressed her with reverence, "No, perhaps I have not sought counsel where I should, but other's judgments are fallible as well as mine—I want unerring guidance."

"A revelation? I can not give it."

"No, not a revelation, but an intuition, an inspiration—a preternatural impression—I know not what you call it. Dear madam, I want you to read a letter for me—"

"I have no preternatural power, friend. Perhaps I have a deeper experience of the potency of nature than some others have. It is by shutting out the disturbances of the outer world, and wholly committing and assigning myself to my spiritual nature that I learn how far its sphere extends—few know theirs, simply because they do not prove it. It is no new thing that I tell you. 'He who believeth in

nature,' says Paracelsus, 'will obtain from nature to the extent of his faith.' You have brought me a letter to read?"

"Yes—but perhaps you know me, and may surmise—"

"No, young lady, I do not know you. I have seen you but once, and then I think you distrusted me—perhaps not remembering that the Gospel, even the good news, was committed to those humble in the world, and weak in the flesh. As to 'surmising,'" she added, with dignity, "I never surmise; that would be untruth to myself. But come, friend, give me your riddle to read."

"You do not know the handwriting?" said Grace, giving her Copley's letter.

"I never look at the handwriting. My apprehension is not through the eye. The writer's mind is transfused into mine; for the moment I lose my self-consciousness and receive another's. Nor does the purport of the letter signify. It may be written simply in good faith, or it may contain the elaborated glosses of falsehood. It is the spirit of the writer which is manifested in me, and to me." She drew a chair for Grace, and one for herself, but before sitting down, "I can not oblige you," she said, "unless you first assure me that your correspondent is free from bodily disease. I have already suffered much physical malady, through the inscrutable effect, on my nervous system, of this letter-reading. I have had temporary deafness, blindness, indescribable pain, paralysis, and permanent debility." Grace assured her there was no risk in the present case. She gazed at the seeress with a throbbing heart, as she sat down and, glancing at the pictures on the wall, fixed her large, blue, prominent, calm eye on the *Parcæ* of Michael Angelo. Her simplicity, the guilelessness of her manner, her freedom from all *charlatanrie*, her faith in herself, inspired Grace with a conviction of her truth and her power; and all combined,

heightened the solemnity with which she awaited a revelation from the arcana of nature. The oracle laid the letter on her bosom, and kept it there by the firm pressure of her hand. Her head was slightly raised, and her eyes, half veiled by her drooping lids, remained steadfast to the picture. There was not the slightest movement or apparent quickening of her pulses, for the space of a quarter of an hour. Then came the faintest hue of color in her pale cheek; it deepened, the blood mounted, the veins in her broad forehead swelled, and her brow contracted, her mouth took a sinister expression, her eyes glanced craftily from side to side, and she shrunk, as if eluding observation. Then, springing to her feet, she threw the letter into the fire, as St. Paul shook the viper from his hand, sunk back in her chair, and covered her face.

After some moments of silence, unbroken save by the loud beating of poor Grace's heart, Ida Roorbach's countenance recovered its usual sweet and composed expression, and beckoning Grace to her, for she was too much exhausted to rise, she laid her ghastly hand on her and said tenderly, in a low, quivering voice, "I could not speak—my lips were sealed; and having been so by an irresistible power, I can not, dare not, now unseal them."

"But why—oh tell me, why you looked so? Why had your face that hateful expression?"

"I do not know how I looked," she replied, mournfully.

"Tell me, then, how you felt—why you threw the letter in the fire, as if it stung you?"

Ida Roorbach hesitated, and then said, with decision, "My friend, I feel that I am not permitted to impart to you what I experienced. My duty is made clear to me. A heathen woman," she continued, pointing to the picture of the Fates, "might ask her destiny of those 'children of night and daughters of necessity;' but now, my eye is turned

to the day-spring from on high, and the word borne into my mind to speak to you is, '*work out your own salvation!*' "

Grace returned to her home. She had opened the book of prophesy, and it was steeped in shadows. She tried the thousand-times repeated experiment of Icarus, and the wings had dropped in the forbidden element, under the stern law, "thus far shalt thou go, and no farther."

END OF VOL. I.

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